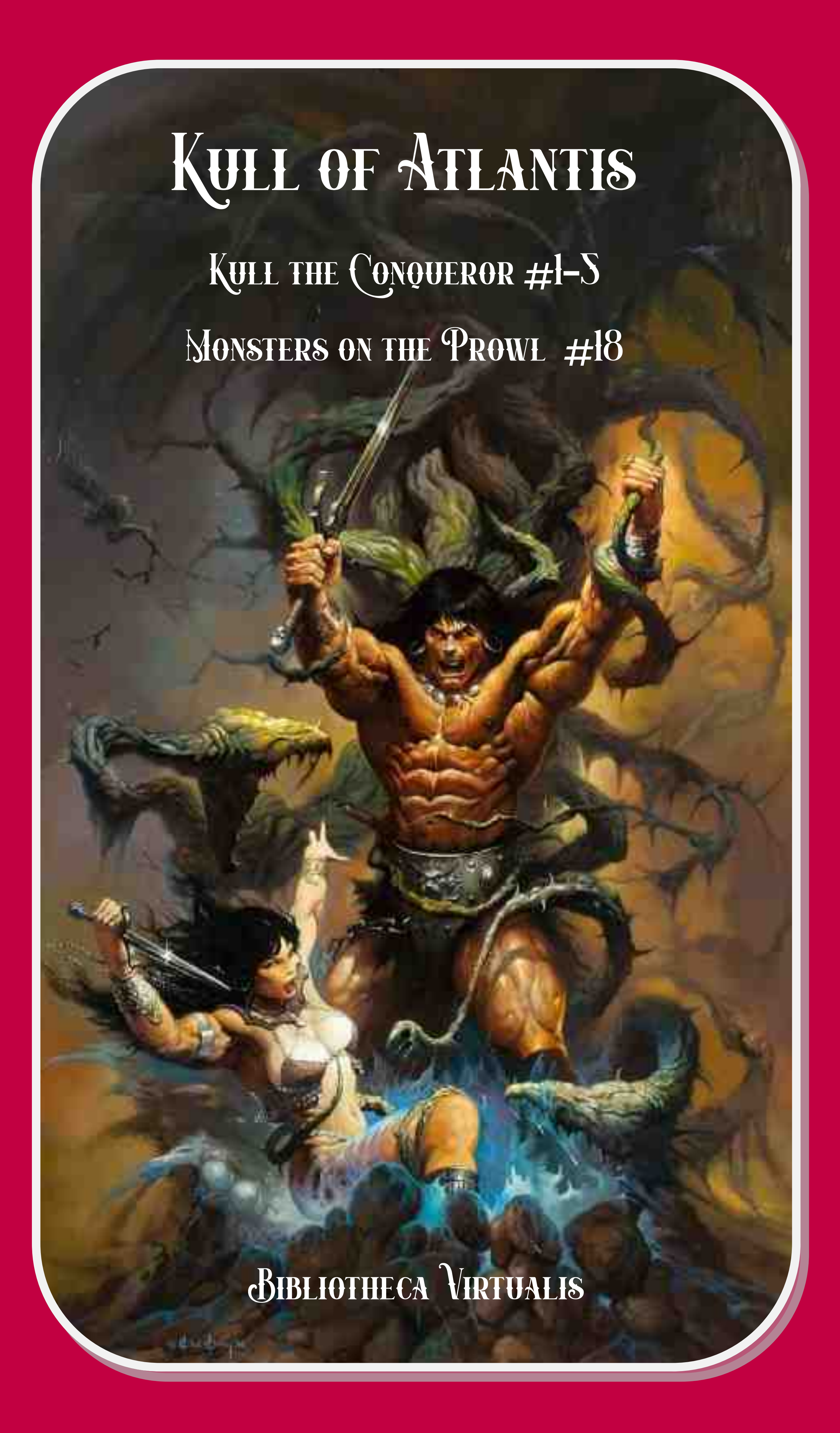


Kull of Atlantis
Kull the Conqueror #1-5
Monsters on the Prowl #18
Bibliotheca Virtualis


KULL CONQUEROR
ISSUE# 1
PG.# 25
HER POWER IS UNCHALLENGED! SHE IS IRAINA THE TIGRESS!
SOON TO BE EMPRESS OF ALL THE THURIAN CONTINENT AND CONQUERER OF THE KNOWN WORLD!

On l'ignore souvent mais T. E. Howard a créé Kull bien avant Conan. En août 1929 pour le premier et décembre 1932 pour le second. En tout cas telles furent les dates de leur première publication dans la revue *Weird Tales* dans les deux cas. L'auteur n'écrivit que 12 nouvelles avec Kull dont seulement trois publiées de son vivant. À contrario 17 nouvelles de Conan dans *Weird Tales* plus celle dans *Fantasy Fan Magazine* furent. À cela il faut rajouter celles qui finies ne furent publiées qu'après sa mort et celles qu'il ébaucha, parfois un simple synopsis, soit une trentaine de nouvelles. Bref, on le voit bien qu'antérieur Kull fut loin d'avoir la même longévité littéraire.

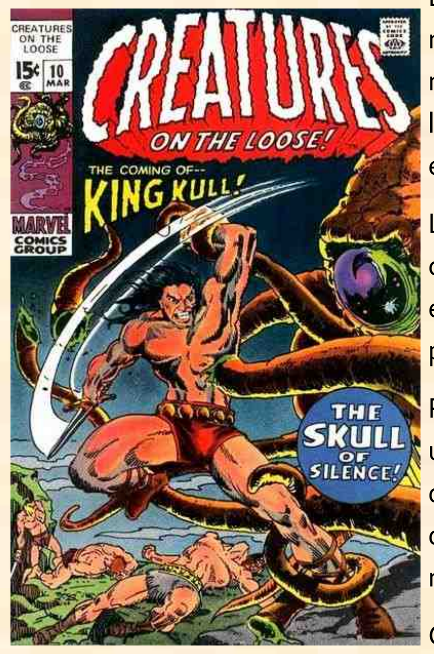


Le numéro d'août 1929

On peut bien sûr se demander pourquoi le roi de l'Atlantide n'a pas eu le même succès que le barbare cimmérien. Oumpah-Pah avait pour créateurs René Goscinny et Albert Uderzo, il a pourtant été viré du journal Tintin, quelques années plus tard Astérix des mêmes auteurs se vendait à des millions d'exemplaires. Pourquoi ?

Sans doute parce que l'identification des lecteurs avec le monde d'Astérix était plus évident qu'avec celui du guerrier des Shavashavas. C'est peut-être un peu la même chose avec Conan les noms des régions du monde hyboréen font parfois penser aux nôtres même si ces zones sont situées dans des endroits différents : L'Afghulistan fait évidemment penser à l'Afghanistan, l'Aquilonie à Rome avec la ville actuelle Aquilonia, Argos renvoie à la Grèce, Asgard à la Scandinavie, Brythunie à la Grande-Bretagne. Iranistan, Darfar, Poitin, Khitaï, Corinthie, etc. sont des noms immédiatement évocateurs et facilitent l'immersion du lecteur, tout comme les animaux sauvages qui sont assimilables aux nôtres mais en plus grands, plus puissants et plus féroces.

Howard imaginait Kull comme vivant voici 100.00 ans. La création de Conan l'amena à apporter quelques précisions supplémentaires. Conan vit à l'âge hyboréen, soit environ 10.000 ans avant notre ère, Kull vit à l'âge thurien celui qui a vu un grand cataclysme et la fin de l'Atlantide, de la Lémurie, etc. mais sans donner davantage de dates. Lyon Sprague de Camp qui reprit les droits de Conan et Kull décida de situer la vie de l'Atlante vers 15.000/20.000 ans avant notre ère.



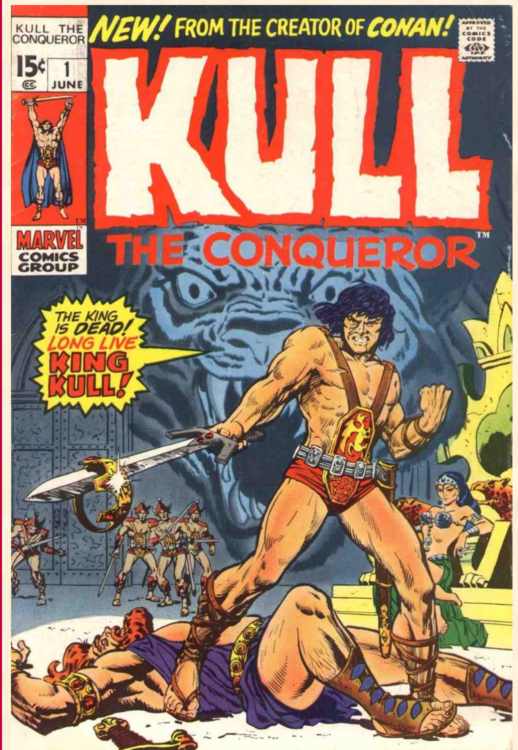
La réédition en format de poche des aventures de Conan par Lancer Books au milieu des années 60 remit l'heroic fantasy au goût du jour. Rien d'extravagant mais suffisamment pour que Marvel s'intéresse au phénomène et envisage de lancer une série. Le projet relatif à Thongor avorta pour des questions de coûts et c'est finalement Conan qui fut choisi.

La revue fut présente dans les stands des kiosques dès la fin juillet 1970, avec comme date du numéro octobre 1970. Les débuts n'eurent rien de fracassants et Stan Lee songea même à arrêter le journal mais Roy Thomas mit tout son poids dans la balance. L'histoire a montré qu'il avait grandement raison.

Parce qu'ils étaient loin d'être sûr du succès du Cimmerien, les éditeurs firent un autre test en décembre 1970 avec le numéro de *Creatures on the Loose* daté de mars 1971. Chaque éditeur avait ainsi une et souvent plusieurs revues dites d'*anthology* dans le sens américain du terme, à savoir pas de héros récurrents mais une volonté de tester les eaux et voir comment le public répond.

Ce test concernait bien sûr Kull.

À dire vrai l'essai n'est pas très concluant. Il s'agit tout d'abord d'une courte bande de 7 planches, pas de quoi bâtir une histoire ayant un peu d'étoffe. Ensuite les dessins sont signés Bernie Wrightson. C'est assurément un grand dessinateur, particulièrement quand il aborde les rivages du fantastique ou de l'horreur mais son style tombe à plat, ou à tout le moins n'est pas assez percutant, dans le genre épique.



Toujours est-il que trois mois plus tard parait le premier numéro de *Kull The Conqueror*. La revue comptera dix numéros avec ce titre mais se prolongera jusqu'en 1979 sous le titre de *Kull The Destroyer* et 19 numéros supplémentaires.

C'est bien sûr Roy Thomas (1940) qui animait déjà Conan qui est chargé des scénarios. Pour cette première histoire c'est Ross Andru (1927-1993) qui tient les pinceaux. Il a étudié le dessin à la *Burne Hogarth's Cartoonists and Illustrators School* et c'est le maître lui-même qui remarque cet élève particulièrement doué. Nous sommes en 1947 et le jeune devient ainsi son assistant sur la série *Tarzan*.

Mais le strip avec Hogarth est arrêté deux ans plus tard alors Ross se met au service de maisons assez secondaires jusqu'à ce qu'il intègre les équipes de DC Comics en 1953. On retrouve son nom dans diverses revues de guerre mais aussi par exemple sur *Wonder Woman* ou *Flash*. À la fin des années 60 il part pour une petite demi-douzaine d'années chez Marvel avant de revenir chez DC Comics.

Ce premier épisode date donc de cet intervalle de temps.

C'est Marie Severin (1929-2018) qui se chargera par la suite des dessins jusqu'au changement de titre du journal, son frère John (1921-2012) assurant les encrages à une exception près.



Marie Severin par Michael Netzer

On retrouve le duo mais de façon inversée cette fois puisque c'est John qui assure les dessins et Marie l'encrage dans le #18 de *Monster on the Prowl*. Cette histoire de 10 planches était censée avoir une suite, *A Viper in our Midst*, qui à ma connaissance n'est sortie nulle part.

La revue s'arrête en 1978 mais entre temps le personnage avait fait une apparition dans un magazine grand format en noir et blanc à la manière de *Savage Sword of Conan*. Nous étions en 1975 et ce *Kull and the Barbarians* ne connaitra que 3 numéros.

Fin de l'histoire ? Pas tout à fait le succès du film Conan en 1982 incite Marvel a retenter le coup en reprenant le titre *Kull the Conqueror*. Ces deux numéros présentent chacun une aventure complète et copieuse de 48 planches. C'est un succès;



La revue repart donc sous le même titre et le même format trimestriel. L'aventure va durer 10 numéros jusqu'à la fin 1985.

Les droits des personnages d'Howard fileront ensuite chez Dark Horse avant de revenir quelques années plus tard chez Marvel.

Mais comme disait Kipking c'est une autre histoire.

En 1997 sort le film Kull the Conqueror qui est un bide total –t mérité semble-t-il. Cette fois encore Kull n'a pu que constater que Conan était un héros plus populaire que lui mais qu'il se rassure, le Cimmérien a tout écraser sur son passage. Jusqu'au moment où Marvel a perdu temporairement les droits elle a publié sous le seul nom de Conan entre les revues et les mini séries pas loin de700 numéros différents. À cela il faudrait rajouter les reprises en omnibus, les rééditions, etc. Bref le barbare est une mine d'or.

Marvel a bien tenté de tester d'autres héros du même acabit, peine perdue. Gullivar Jones aura droit à 60 planches couleurs dans les numéros de *Creatures on the Loose*. Malgré la présence de Gil Kane aux dessins et toujours avec Roy Thomas au scénario, c'est un succès d'estime, sans plus. Marvel retente une nouvel essai en 1974 dans *Monsters Unleashed*, en noir et blanc cette fois, mais sans davantage d'enthousiasme de la part du public.

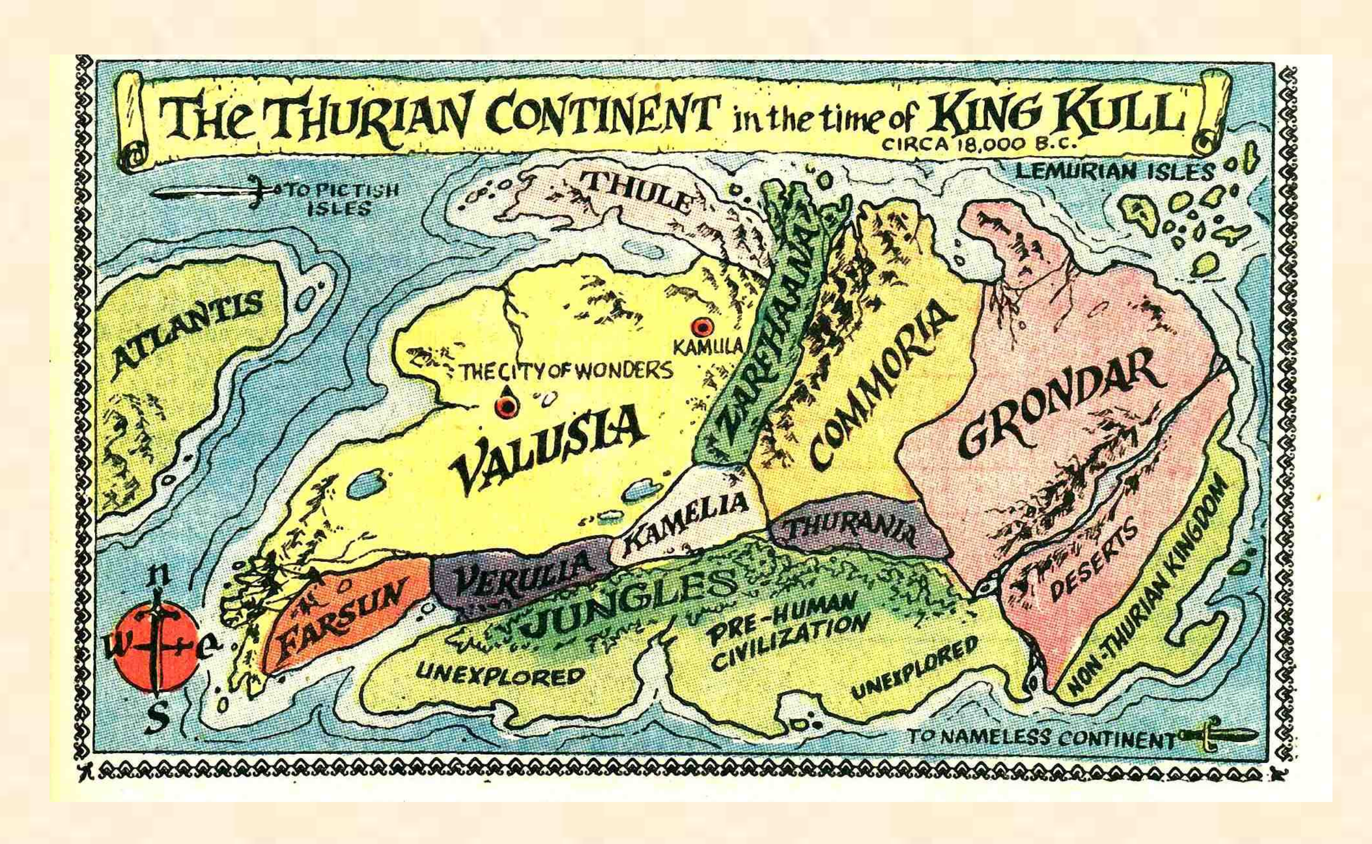
Alors puisqu'i veut du barbare on va lui donner du barbare. Apparition, toujours dans *Creatures on the Loose*, de *Thongor*, le personnage de Lin Carter qui est la copie conforme du Cimmérien.

Question : Les huit aventures de Thongor et ses 125 planches sont pleines d'action mais pourquoi publier une copie quand on a l'original ?

Conan n'est pas simplement une mine d'or, c'est aussi un ogre qui dévore la concurrence. Signalons au passage que l'intégralité des aventures de Gullivar Jones et Thongor telles que parues dans *Creatures on the Loose* sont, disponibles dans Bibliotheca Virtualis. Vous pouvez donc vous en faire une idée tout comme désormais pour Kull puisque voici regroupées les cinq premières histoires parues dans Kull the Conqueror ainsi que celle chez Monsters on the Prowl

Bienvenue dans l'âge thurien !

Garches, le 3 novembre 2022









AND NOW, MOUNTED ATOP A GREAT STALLION, IN THE FOREFRONT OF THE FABLED BLACK LEGIONS OF VALUSIA--
KING KULL!

A KING COMES RIDING!

BASED ON THE HEROIC TALES OF Robert E. Howard CREATOR OF KULL OF VALUSIA

STAN LEE EDITOR * ROY THOMAS WRITER * ROSS ANDRU and WALLY WOOD ARTISTS * SAM ROSEN LETTERER

KULL, THE CONQUEROR is published by MAGAZINE MANAGEMENT CO., INC. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 625 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022. Published bi-monthly. Vol. 1, No. 1, June, 1971 issue. Price 15¢ per copy. Printed in the U.S.A. by World Color Press, Inc., Sparta, Illinois 62286. Subscription rate $2.00 and $2.50 Canada for 12 issues including postage. Foreign subscriptions $4.00.


WHISPERS REACH KULL'S HEARING --HUSHED STIRRINGS FROM THE CROWDS THAT THRONG THE STREETS:


"THAT IS KULL, SEE! VALKA, WHAT A KING! WHAT A MAN! LOOK AT HIS ARMS --- HIS SHOULDERS!"


AND, AN UNDERTONE OF MORE SINISTER WHISPERINGS: "KULL--HAH! ACCURSED USURPER FROM PAGAN ATLANTIS!"
"AYE-- SHAME TO VALUSIA THAT A BARBARIAN SITS THE THRONE OF KINGS!"


BUT, WHICH MAN IN THE PRESS IS TRULY FOR HIM-- AND WHICH, SECRETLY AGAINST? KULL CANNOT STRIP AWAY THE GAILY-GRIMACING MASKS, TO TELL FRIEND FROM FOE--
HE KNOWS ONLY THAT, HEAVY-HANDED DID HE SEIZE THE DECAYING THRONE OF ANCIENT VALUSIA-- AND WITH A HEAVIER HAND DOES HE HOLD IT---
--- A MAN---
--AGAINST A NATION.

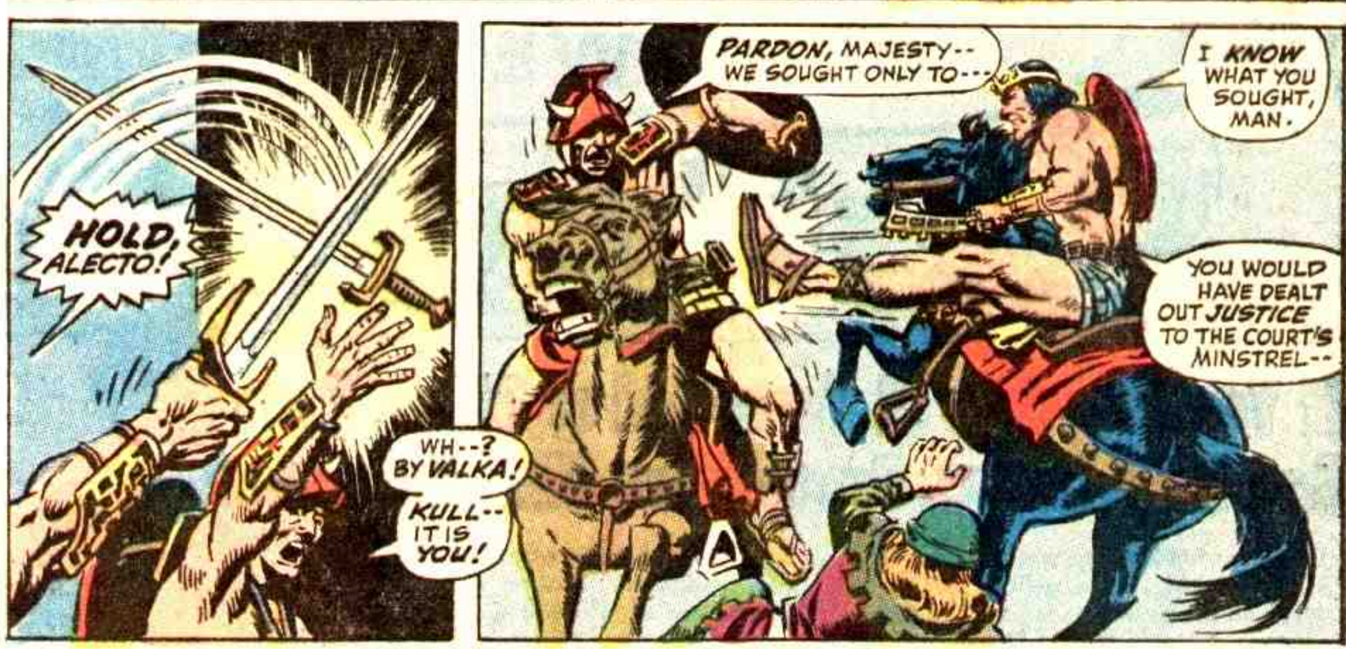

YET, ONE MAN, AT LEAST, WEARS NO MASK---THE MAD-EYED MINSTREL NAMED RIDONDO---
WHAT FOOLS MEN ARE! EITHER FOOLS-- OR HYPOCRITES!


WELL, PER-HAPS A SONG WILL SEPARATE THE ONE FROM THE OTHER.
WHEN I WAS A YOUNG THING, AH, THEN WAS A GREAT KING-- A MAN---NOT A BLACK-HEARTED SAVAGE---
SILENCE, FOOL. DO YOU WANT THE KING HIM-SELF TO HEAR?


HOW EVER DID YOU GUESS?
---BUT NOW, FROM HIS STATION, KULL MAKES OF OUR NATION A LAND NOT TO RULE --- BUT TO RAVAGE--!
2.











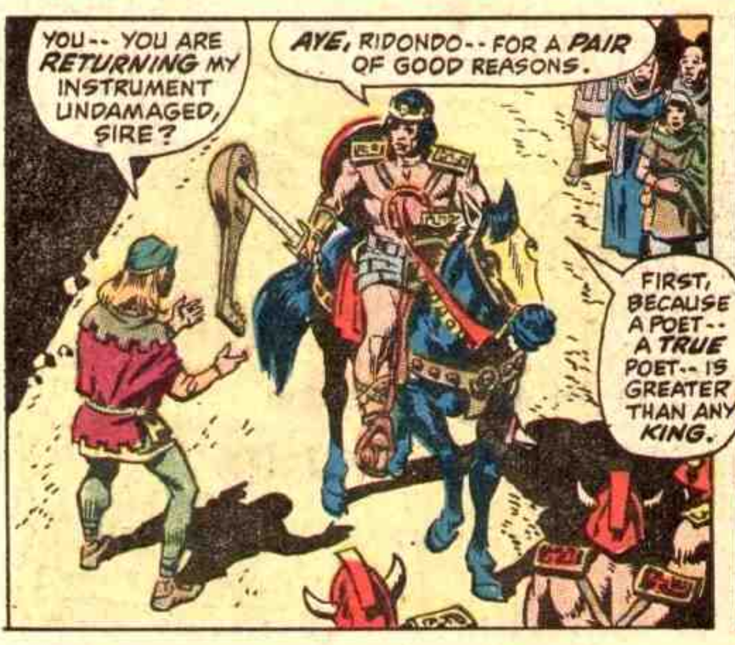
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I TELL YOU, HE IS A TRAITOR, SIRE.
THE KING THAT HE LAMENTS IS THE VERY TYRANT YOU SLEW!


WHILE I TELL YOU, ALECTO, TO KEEP SILENCE!
DO YOU THINK I'VE NOT HEARD THAT SONG BEFORE?


AND, BY THE GODS OF BOTH ATLANTIS AND VALUSIA--


--I SENSE THAT I SHALL HEAR IT AGAIN.


YOU-- YOU ARE RETURNING MY INSTRUMENT UNDAMAGED, SIRE?
AYE, RIDONDO-- FOR A PAIR OF GOOD REASONS.
FIRST, BECAUSE A POET-- A TRUE POET-- IS GREATER THAN ANY KING.


AHH, SIRE--- YOU HAVE A SOUL, WHATEVER YOUR BARBAROUS ORIGINS!
BUT WHAT, PRAY, MIGHT BE THE SECOND REASON?


'TIS THAT ONLY THE WEAK SHOULD WALK IN FEAR OF WORDS, HOWEVER PRETTY.
AND, WHATEVER ELSE HE BE--- KULL IS NOT WEAK!
Y-YOU ARE A TOWER OF STRENGTH, MILORD.
I SHALL COMPOSE AN ODE TO YOU-- NAY, AN HUNDRED ODES.


AND I SHALL SING THE LOUDEST ONE, KULL-- THE DAY I DANCE ON YOUR GRAVE!
4

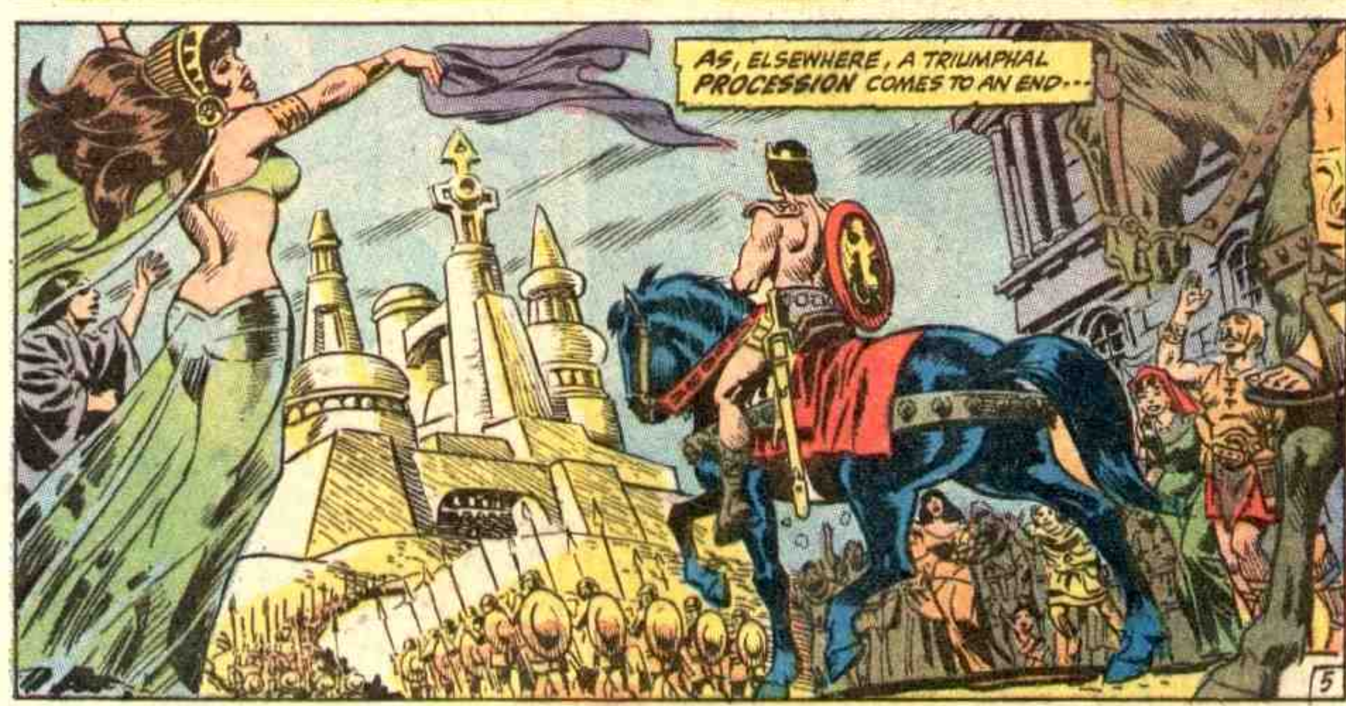
THEN, A FURTIVE TWISTING THRU ALLEYWAYS, AND..





















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CLOSE THE DOORS, GOOD TU-- AND DO NOT LISTEN AT THE KEYHOLE.
NOW, PICT, TELL ME YOUR NAME--
---AND NEWS OF YOUR PEOPLE, WHOM I FOUGHT AS A YOUTH IN FAR-OFF ATLANTIS.

I AM BRULE-- CALLED THE SPEAR-SLAYER.
KA-NU, AMBASSADOR OF OUR WESTERN ISLES, SENDS GREETINGS AND SAYS--
"A SEAT AWAITS KULL OF VALUSIA THIS NIGHT, AT THE FEAST OF THE RISING MOON."
SAY TO YOUR CHIEF THAT I WILL COME.

KA-NU BIDS YOU COME-- ALONE!
SOME-HOW, I FEEL THERE IS AN "AND."
AND, PICT?

ALONE? THIS HAS ALL THE EARMARKS OF A TRAP.
HOW DO I KNOW YOU COME FROM KA-NU?
I HAVE SPOKEN!
AND WHEN DID A PICT SPEAK TRUTH?

YOU SEEM TO WISH TO ANGER ME, KING-- AND BY THE GODS, YOU NEED GO NO FURTHER.
MY CHIEF HAS FORBID-DEN ME TO RAISE MY SPEAR WITHIN THIS PALACE.
A KING DOES NOT ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE OF A SULLEN SAVAGE.
SO--YOU MAY NOT USE YOUR SPEAR WITHIN THESE WALLS, EH?
BUT, MEET ME OUTSIDE IT, AND I'LL---

WELL, WE'LL SEE HOW FARES THE OATH OF A PICT--
--WHEN MY BLADE COMES WHISTLING TOWARD YOUR SKULL.

7.




YOU ARE BRAVE, PICT.
I THINK, TOO, THAT YOU ARE NO LIAR!

THUS, SAY TO KA-NU THE ANCIENT THAT I WILL QUAFF WINE WITH HIM THIS NIGHT--
AND THAT I SHALL COME ALONE.
YES, KING. YET, IF EVER YOU DESIRE IT---
--MY CHALLENGE STILL STANDS.

KULL SAYS NOTHING AS THE DARK-SKINNED SAVAGE INSOLENTLY TURNS HIS BACK AND STRIDES FROM THE GREAT HALL---

FOR HE SENSES THAT HE HAS JUST SEEN, AS IT WERE, THE GHOST OF HIMSELF WHEN YOUNG---

-- AND IN HIS MIND'S EYE, KULL IS ONCE MORE A YOUTHFUL BARBARIAN, COUNTLESS LEAGUES AWAY ON THE PRIMITIVE ISLE CALLED ATLANTIS -- AND THE MOON GLIMMERS OVER DISTANT MOUNTAINS -- AND THE WIND SIGHS THRU THE TALL GRASS.
FAR OFF, A TIGER ROARS---
THE STRIPED BROTHERS HUNT TONIGHT.

THEY WORSHIP THE RISING MOON, KULL.
WHY SHOULD THEY, OM-RA? IT ONLY SHOWS THEM TO THEIR PREY-- AND THEIR ENEMIES.
THE BOY SPEAKS TRULY, KULL. DO NOT BLASPHEME THE LEGENDS OF OUR TRIBE.
8.













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I DO NOT UNDER-STAND, OLD WOMAN. WHY MUST THEY KILL ONE SO HELPLESS?
ARE YOU A FOREIGNER, THAT YOU KNOW NOT THE SACRED LAWS OF OUR TRIBE?
SHE WHO MARRIES AN ENEMY IS AN ENEMY -- AND SO MUST DIE!
BUT, WHAT OF HER FAMILY--?
SHE WAS MY DAUGHTER ONCE-- BUT NO LONGER.

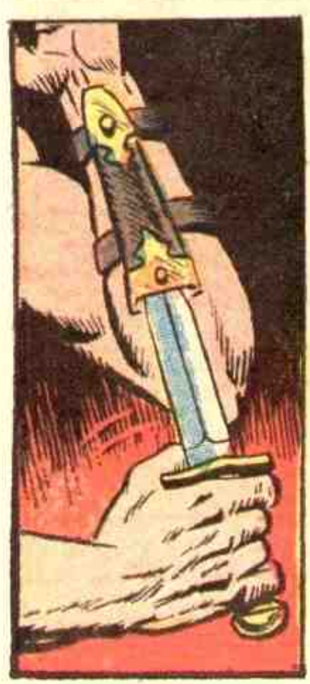

NOR SHOULD YOU DREAM ANY DREAMS OF SAVING HER FROM THE FIRES.
NO WEAPON OF YOURS WOULD PIERCE HER CHAINS.
NO-- NOT HER CHAINS--















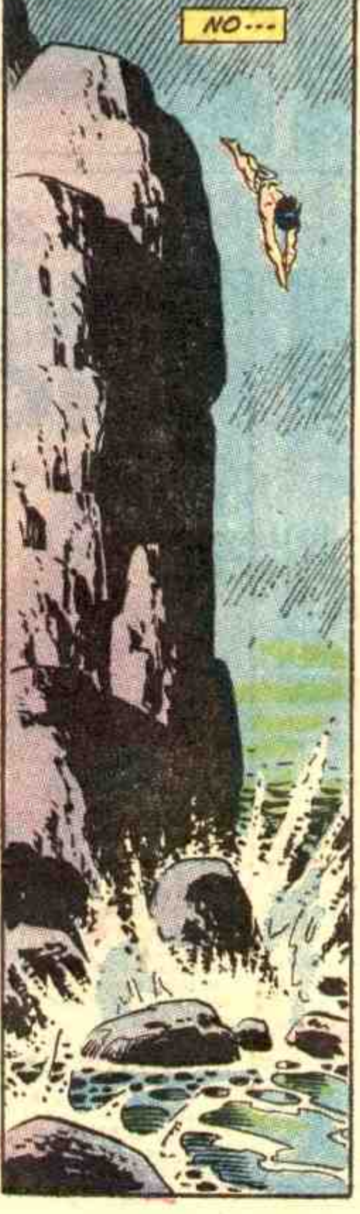

SHE'S-- DEAD!
10


THERE'S THE ONE WHO SLEW THE GIRL QUICKLY--- ROBBED US OF OUR SPORT!
LET HIM TAKE HER PLACE!


I'LL BRING HIM DOWN! THEN--

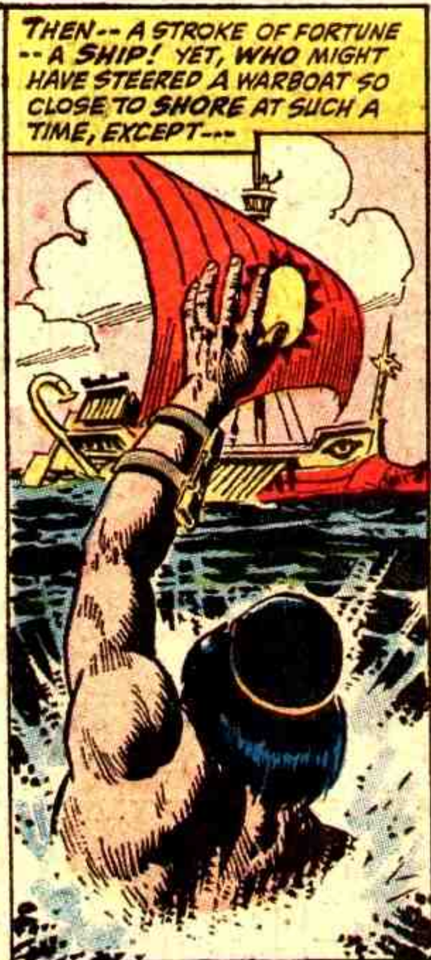

UNNHH


THE ARROWS SING WIDE AND ASIDE. BUT STILL, KULL HEARS THE SCREAMING ON HIS TRACK-- HIS OWN TRIBESMEN, WILD TO RUN HIM DOWN AND SLAY HIM FOR VIOLATING THEIR STRANGE AND BLOODY CODE OF MORALS.
BUT NO MAN IN ATLANTIS CAN OUTRUN KULL OF THE SEA-MOUNTAIN TRIBE---


NO---


--NOR OUTSWIM HIM, EITHER--!
11.


DEEP, DEEP DIVES THE YOUNG BARBARIAN-- AND FAR DOES HE SWIM---
---HIS LUNGS ALL BUT BURSTING ERE HE SUR-FACES ONCE MORE---


THEN-- A STROKE OF FORTUNE --A SHIP! YET, WHO MIGHT HAVE STEERED A WARBOAT SO CLOSE TO SHORE AT SUCH A TIME, EXCEPT--


--LEMURIAN PIRATES!
12



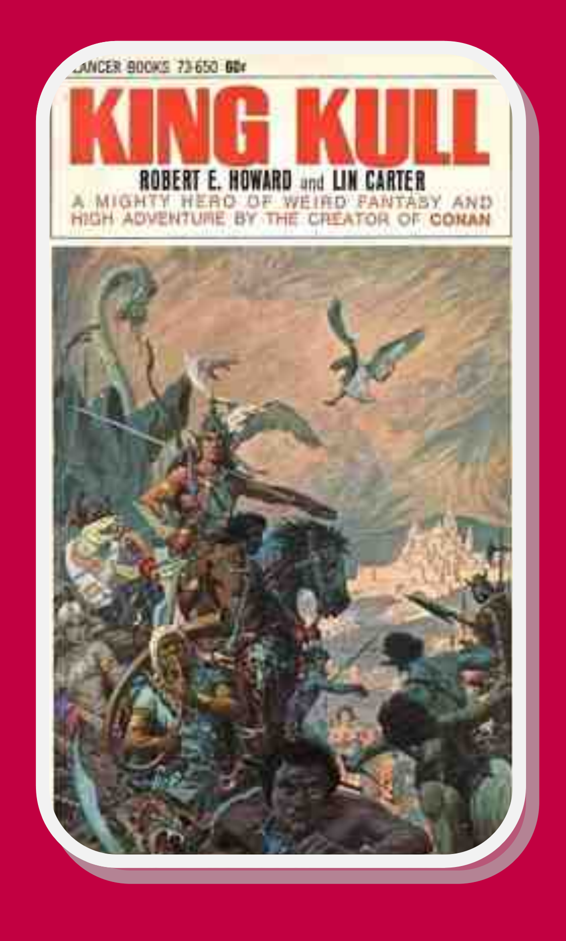
BEATEN OFF BY THE FIERCE-EYED ATLANTEANS IN AN EARLIER BATTLE--- THE GIRL SAREETA'S HUSBAND SLAIN--- THE LEMURIANS ARE MOVING ON TO OTHER PREY, EASIER PICKINGS---

--AND NOW THEY HAVE A BULL-STRONG NEW OARSMAN TO HELP SPEED THEIR PROW THRU ANGRY WATERS.

FOR TWO YEARS, KULL LABORS BENEATH THE MAST OF THE GALLEY-- SEES SHIPS OF ALL NATIONS SINK TO WATERY GRAVES BEFORE THE ONSLAUGHT OF HER CORSAIR CREW--

--THOUGH THEY GO NO MORE NEAR UNTAMED ATLANTIS.

13



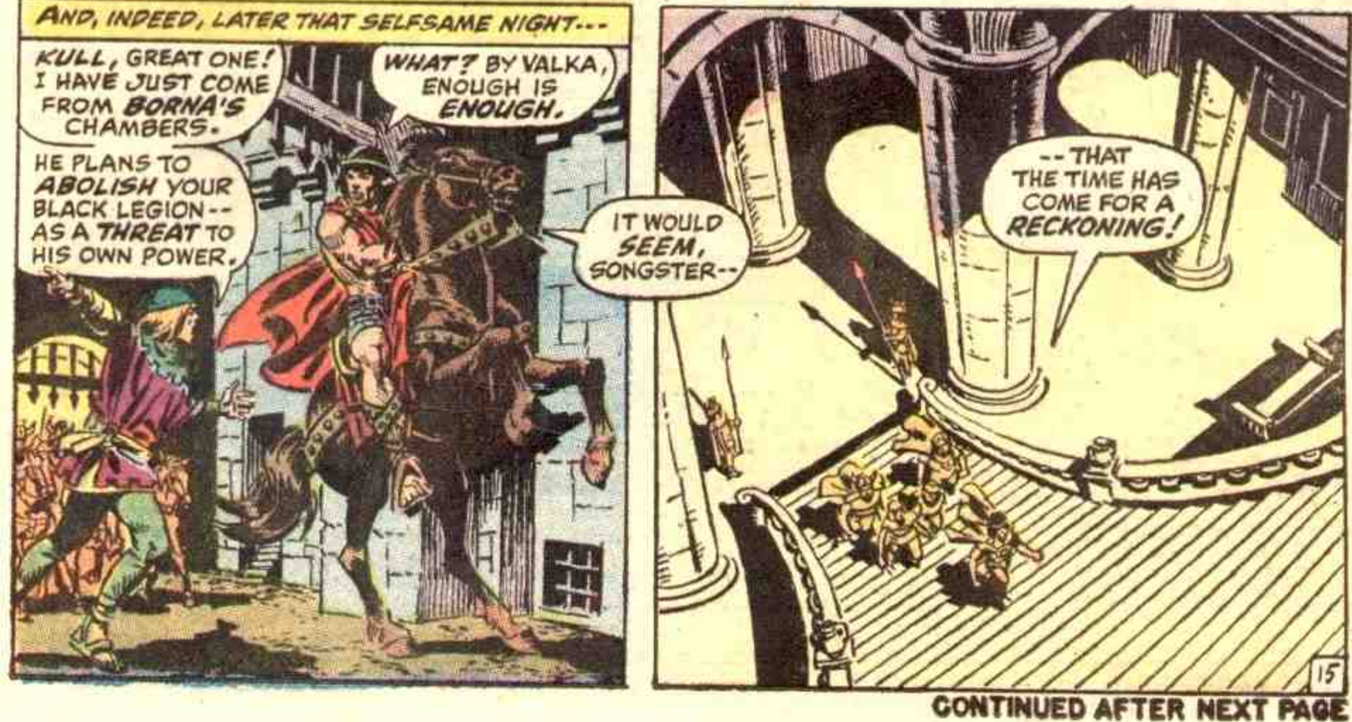

YET, EVEN PIERCING PIRATE EYES CANNOT ALWAYS BE EVERYWHERE-- AND ONE CLEAR NIGHT OFF THE COAST OF VALUSIA, A TIGRISH MOON WINKS DOWN AT A GRIM, GREAT-MUSCLED SWIMMER---
GLADLY, KULL JOINS THE OUTLAW BANDS WHO HOLD AN UNEASY SWAY IN THE WILD HILL-COUNTRY--- TILL CAPTURED, AFTER WHICH HE BECOMES A GLADIATOR IN VALUSIA'S RED-STAINED ARENA---
BUT, NO FIGHTING-MAN OF KULL'S PROWESS SHOULD BE WASTED IN THE CAUSE OF FUTILE SWORDPLAY-- AND SO THE ATLANTEAN OUTCAST BECOMES A SOLDIER IN THE VALUSIAN ARMY---
-- THEN, FINALLY, THE BATTLE-BRED COMMANDER OF THE BLACK LEGION--- A POST NEXT ONLY TO KING BORNA HIMSELF IN POWER AND PRESTIGE---
-- THUS BECOMING A MAN TO BE WARY OF-- A MAN TO BE DEALT WITH---
14











CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE


BORNA! STAND YOU FORTH, TYRANT!
YOU WILL NOT DISSOLVE THE BLACK LEGION-- NOT WHILE I LIVE!
KULL--YOU IGNORANT SAVAGE-- HOW DARE YOU BURST IN HERE WITH YOUR WILD, TREASONOUS CHARGES?
TILL THIS MOMENT, I'D NOT THOUGHT OF DISBANDING THE LEGION--
BUT, ONCE THOUGHT OF, IT SEEMS NOT A BAD IDEA!


YOU TOY WITH WORDS, KING-- AS WITH THE LIVES OF YOUR PEOPLE.
DO YOU PLAY EQUALLY WELL, I WONDER--


--WITH THE RUSTED BATTLE-AXE YOU ONCE WIELDED IN COMBAT?
I DO, FOOL --AS YOU'LL SOON LEARN.
AWAY, RED SLAYERS-- I NEED NO PROTECTION FROM THIS INSOLENT PUP.


JUST STAND YOU BY--TO CART HIM OUT WHEN I'M FINISHED!


AND SO IT BEGINS--


THE CLASH OF SWORD AGAINST AXE-- AND TIGER AGAINST BURLY-LIMBED BEAR--


HAH! YOU'RE FAST, KULL--
I'LL GIVE YOU THAT!
16


AND I'LL GIVE YOU -- THIS!


BY THE GODS, I'M THRU WITH PLAYING!
WHILE I NEVER PLAY, TYRANT--


NEVER!!


VALKA! IF AND WHEN I MOUNT THE THRONE-- I DON'T KNOW IF I'D WANT A MAN LIKE KULL AROUND.
DO NOT CONCERN YOURSELF, DEAR BARON.
I SUSPECT KULL WILL NOT LONG SURVIVE ANY TRIUMPH HE MAY WIN TONIGHT.


HAH! ALL DONE WITH BRASH WORDS NOW, ARE YOU, BARBARIAN?
I DON'T BLAME YOU-- FOR, THOUGH I UNDERESTIMATED YOU BEFORE---
--NOW I AM ON GUARD-- SWIFT ENOUGH TO PARRY YOUR EVERY BLOW-- STRONG ENOUGH TO OUTLAST YOU--


--AND SKILLED ENOUGH TO DRAW-- FIRST BLOOD!

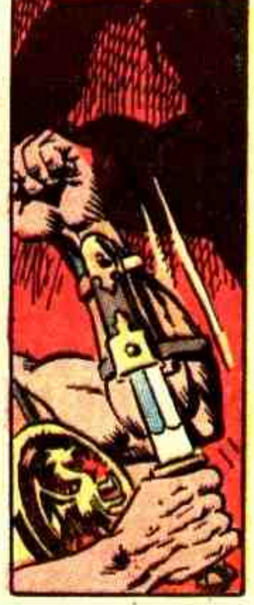

LONG WILL YOU KEEP THE SCAR YOU HAVE WON THIS NIGHT, KULL--


--AYE, IF YOU SURVIVE!
WH--? THE THRONE-STEPS--!


YOU TRIPPED ON YOUR WAY TO A THRONE, KULL.
DOESN'T THAT SEEM-- IRONIC?


SWORDLESS NOW! IF YOU WORSHIP HEATHEN GODS, ATLANTEAN--
PRAY TO THEM QUICKLY!
17

















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---UNLESS THERE ARE ANY OBJECTIONS!?

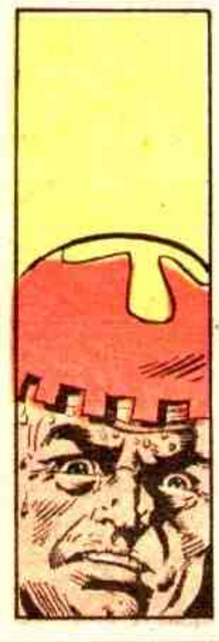

NONE, SIRE!
HERE-- TAKE YOU THE ROYAL GOBLET FROM WHICH THE TYRANT DID QUAFF HIS LAST.


ALL HAIL--- KING KULL!


ALL HAIL-- KING KULL!










ALL HAIL KING KULL!
BLESS YOU, MY CHILDREN. YOU MAY GO NOW.
GIRL-- COME FILL THIS GOBLET, WILL YOU?


AND THUS WAS KULL, WANDERING ADVENTURER, EXILE OF ATLANTIS, SWEPT UP TO THE DIZZYING HEIGHTS OF HIS DREAMS--!
BUT NIGHT HAS FALLEN, WHILE THE KING HAS SAT ALONE, WRAPPED IN THOUGHTS OF GLORY---
--AND IT IS TIME TO DEPART FOR THE CAMP OF KA-NU THE PICT, AMBASSADOR OF THE WESTERN ISLES--
19











KULL THE KING!

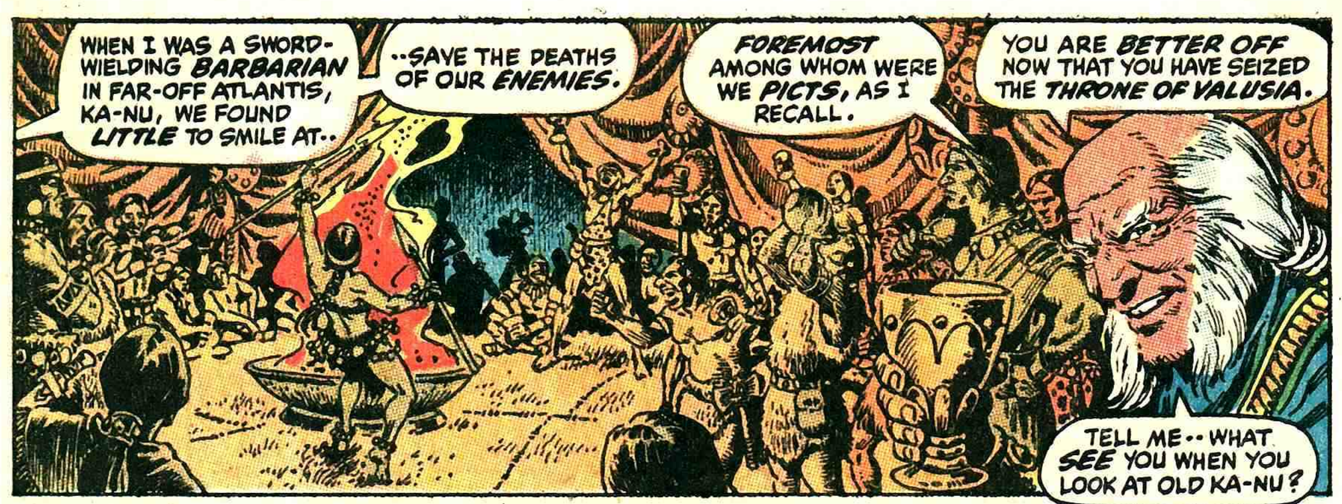
AND, IN A DIM NOOK OF THE GREAT HALL, A TAPESTRY MOVES ---SLIGHTLY--!

NEXT: A KINGDOM OF SHADOWS!

20.



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WHEN I WAS A SWORD-WIELDING BARBARIAN IN FAR-OFF ATLANTIS, KA-NU, WE FOUND LITTLE TO SMILE AT..
..SAVE THE DEATHS OF OUR ENEMIES.
FOREMOST AMONG WHOM WERE WE PICTS, AS I RECALL.
YOU ARE BETTER OFF NOW THAT YOU HAVE SEIZED THE THRONE OF VALUSIA.
TELL ME--WHAT SEE YOU WHEN YOU LOOK AT OLD KA-NU?



SEE? WHY-- THE EMISSARY OF A PROUD PEOPLE-- ONE WHO SPEAKS FOR VALUSIA'S STAUNCHEST ALLIES.
UH--NO MORE WINE FOR ME.
THEN BRING THAT GOURD OVER HERE, GIRL.



YOU LIE LIKE A TRUE STATESMAN, KULL.
YOU'RE THINKING KA-NU IS A USE-LESS OLD FOOL-- FIT ONLY TO GUZZLE WINE AND KISS WENCHES.
WELL-- WE SHALL SEE.



NOW BEGONE, MY FELLOW PICTS-- THE KING AND I MUST CON-VERSE ON LOFTIER MATTERS.
YES, YOU TOO, MY PRETTY.



AND NOW, KULL, I MUST WIN YOUR TRUST-- FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR CIVILIZED NATION, AND MY SAVAGE ONE.
TRUST? I CAME HERE ALONE, AS YOUR MAN BRULE BADE ME.
WHAT MORE ASSURANCES CAN I MAKE?
I DO NOT SEEK ASSURANCES, KULL...



..I WISH TO GIVE THEM.
LOOK YOU.
VALKA! THE STOLEN GEM-- FROM THE TEMPLE OF THE SERPENT!
IT WAS TAKEN-- YEARS AGO!



THE WORLD WILL ROCK WITH WAR IF THE PRIESTS LEARN IT WAS A PICT WHO STOLE IT.
BUT--WHY HAVE YOU TOLD ME THIS?
PERHAPS TO PUT MYSELF-- ENTIRELY AT YOUR MERCY.
2





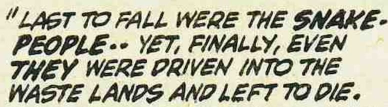


YET, STIR YOUR MEMORIES, KING-- PLUMB THE HIDDEN DEPTHS WHICH ALL MEN SHARE, AND--

I-- SEEM TO GLIMPSE THEM DARKLY-- AS THRU A MYSTIC DOOR--

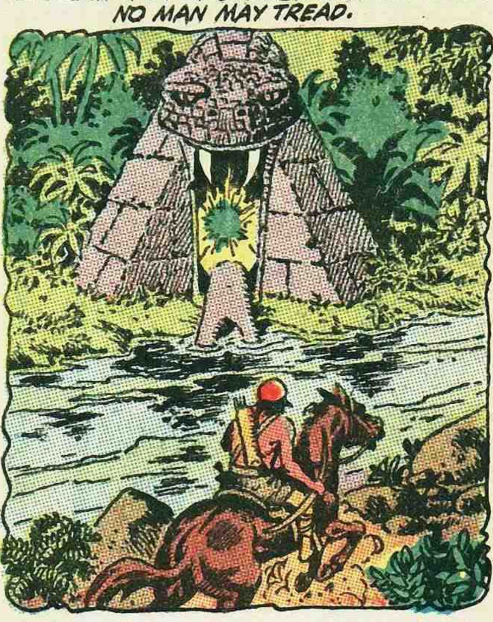
AHH---













SO-- GO YOU NOW WITH BRULE THE SPEAR-SLAYER--TRUST HIM AS YOU HAVE TRUSTED ME--

AND PRAY, O KING-- PRAY!

THE HORSES ARE READY-- ATLANTEAN.

3.

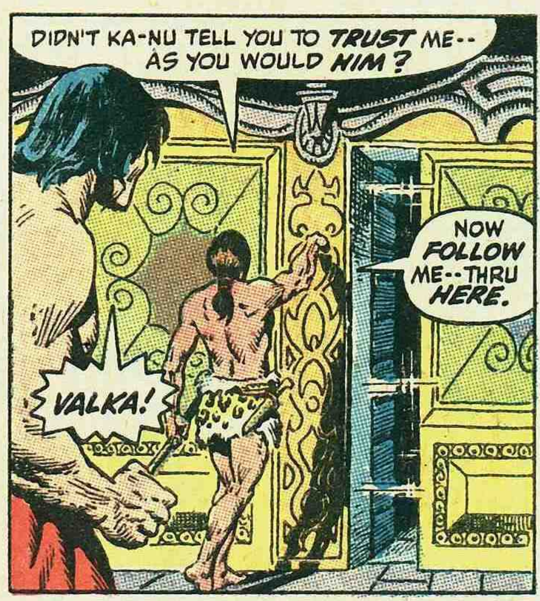
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A MILLION QUESTIONS DIE UN-ASKED ON KULL'S LIPS--BUT NO WORD IS SPOKEN 'TWIXT BARBARIAN-BECOME-KING AND PICTISH WARRIOR, AS THEY HURRY THRU THE CITY'S YAWNING GATES---


--PAST THE BROODING BUST OF EALLAL, KING WHO REIGNED A THOUSAND YEARS BEFORE--AND WAS FOUND MURDERED IN HIS THRONEROOM---


--PAST, AT LAST, THOSE WHO GUARD THE KING'S OWN CHAMBERS.
LET NOTHING DISTURB OUR REST, RED SLAYERS.
YES, MAJESTY.


YOU BAITED ME THIS AFTERNOON, KING--BUT KA-NU SAYS VALUSIA NEEDS YOU, SO YOU MUST BE SAVED.
SAVED? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, SAVAGE?
YOU SHALL SEE--FOR, AHEAD OF YOU THIS NIGHT ARE DEEDS NO OTHER ATLANTEAN EVER DREAMED OF. COME.
AND WHO ARE YOU TO GIVE ME ORDERS?

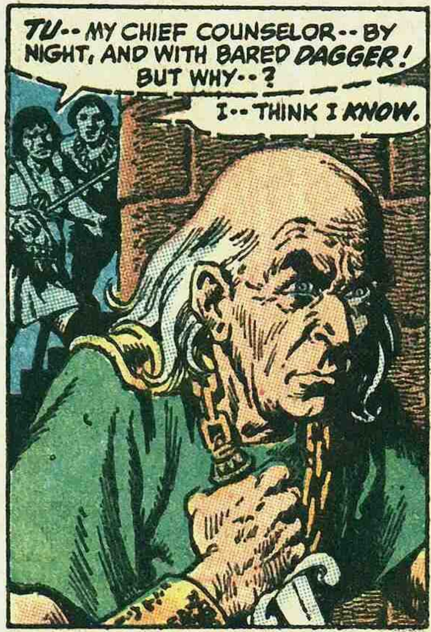

DIDN'T KA-NU TELL YOU TO TRUST ME--AS YOU WOULD HIM?
NOW FOLLOW ME--THRU HERE.
VALKA!


SECRET PASSAGES--HONEY-COMBING THE VERY PALACE--AND I KNEW NOTHING OF THEM.
BY THE GODS, SOMEONE SHALL DANCE FOR THIS!
SILENCE.
LOOK YONDER--BUT NO WORD--NO SOUND--ON YOUR LIFE.


WHAT--? RED SLAYERS--DEAD!!
4


TREACHERY-- FOUL AND SWIFT!
MINUTES AGO, THESE SAME MEN STOOD AT GUARD.
STOOD, KULL? LOOK OVER HERE--THRU THIS HIDDEN SLIT---

--AND YOU'LL SEE THAT THEY STILL DO.

THIS IS SORCERY! DO DEAD MEN GUARD THE KING? I---
HO! WHOSE STEP IS THAT--- PASSING US BY?

TU-- MY CHIEF COUNSELOR-- BY NIGHT, AND WITH BARED DAGGER! BUT WHY--?
I-- THINK I KNOW.

COME, KULL. THERE IS A SHORTER WAY-- TO YOUR ADVISOR'S GOAL.
GOAL? BRULE, I MUST KNOW THE SENSE TO ALL THIS-- BEFORE IT DRIVES ME MAD.

WHAT? YOU'VE BROUGHT ME-- TO MY OWN BED-CHAMBER.
GET INTO BED-- AND FEIGN THE DEEP SLEEP.
AND THEN WE SHALL SEE---
--WHAT WE SHALL SEE.




5











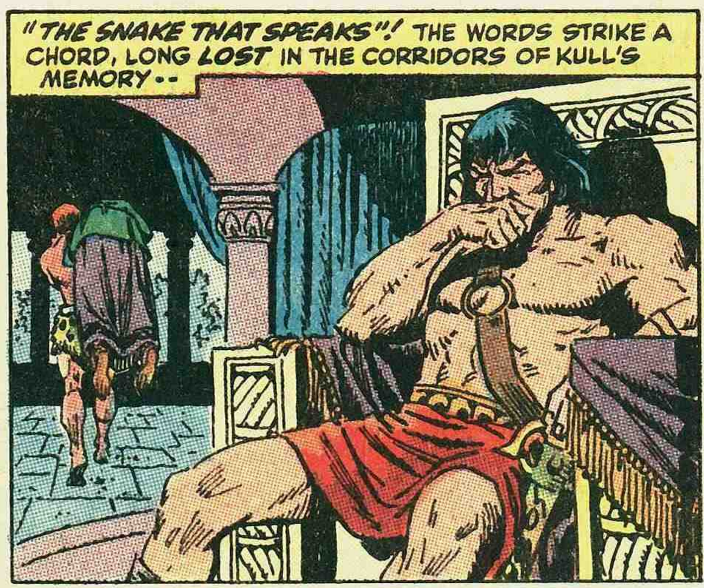






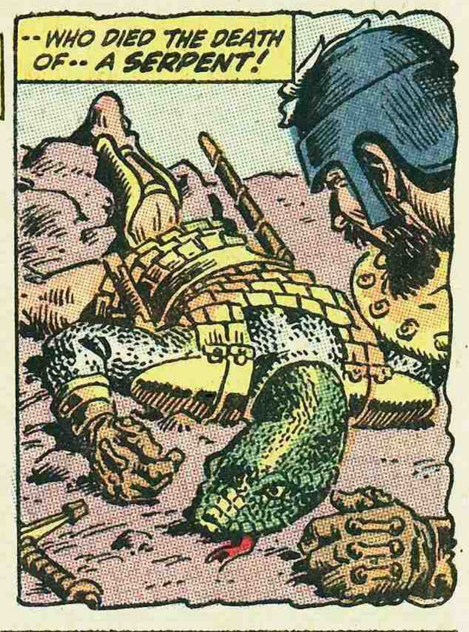
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A MAN-- WITH THE HEAD OF A SERPENT! THE "SNAKE THAT SPEAKS"!
THEN, KA-NU KNEW WHEREOF HE SPOKE. AND TU--?
HE SLEEPS UN-KNOWING. WAIT HERE-- WHILE I HIDE THE SERPENT-PRIEST'S BODY.


"THE SNAKE THAT SPEAKS"! THE WORDS STRIKE A CHORD, LONG LOST IN THE CORRIDORS OF KULL'S MEMORY--


--AND HE RECALLS A LEGEND OF HIS TRIBE-- OF A VALUSIAN KING, AMBUSHED BY ATLANTEANS---


--SLAIN BY THE HAND OF GANDARO OF THE SPEAR--


--WHO DIED THE DEATH OF-- A SERPENT!


BUT--WAS IT THE TRUE, HUMAN KING WHO DIED ON THOSE RED SANDS--AS KULL WOULD HAVE DIED THIS NIGHT, WERE IT NOT FOR---
BRULE-- YOU RETURN SWIFTLY FROM YOUR TASK.


PERHAPS NOW YOU CAN TELL ME MORE-- OF--

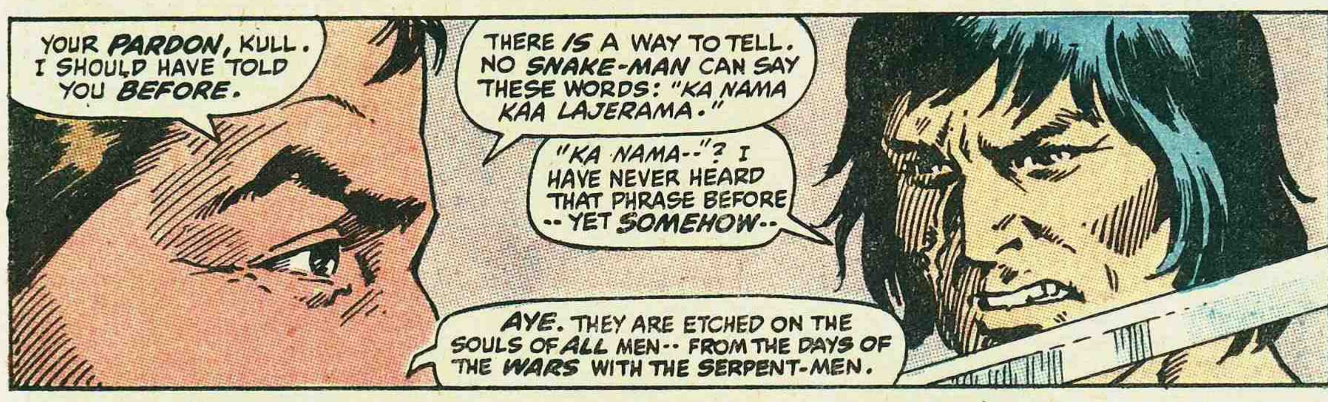

VALKA AND HOTATH!
7.

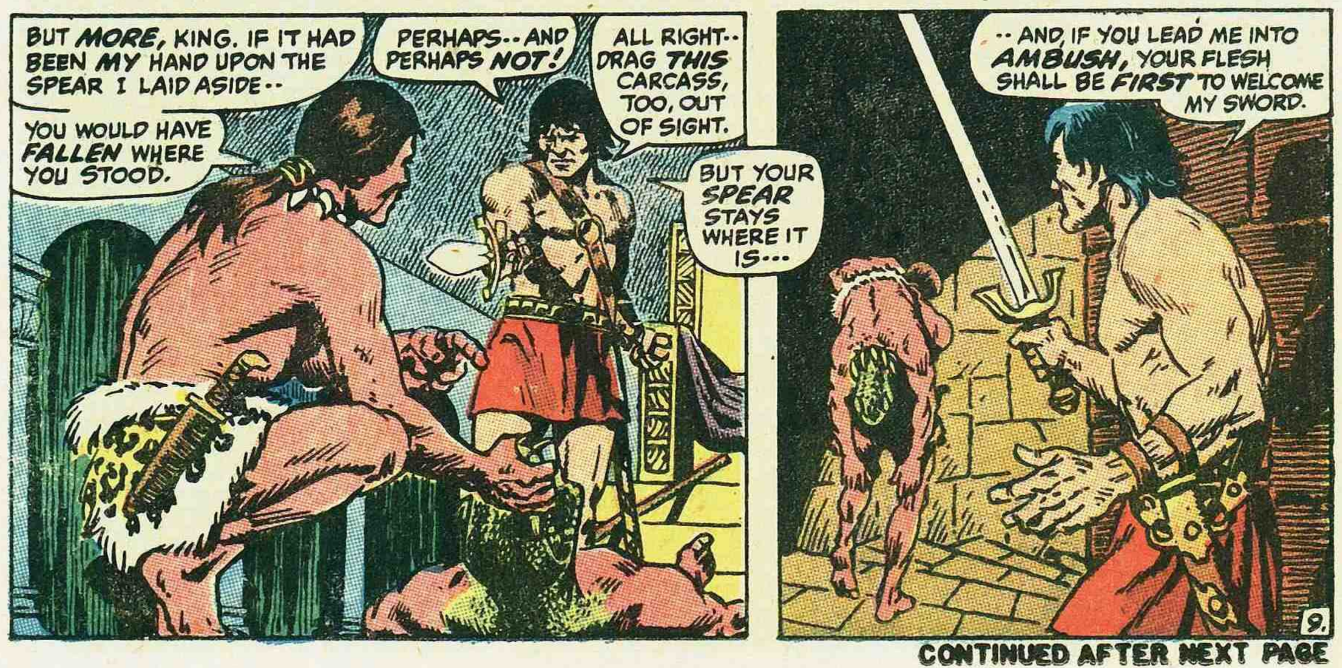

SO! I RECALL THE CHALLENGE YOU MADE BEFORE-- TO MATCH ME SPEAR FOR SWORD.
AND NOW, YOU WOULD HAVE STRUCK ME OFF-GUARD-- TREACHERY BEYOND TREACHERY.
WILL NOT SPEAK, EH? THEN, BY THE SINGING CLIFFS OF FAR-OFF ATLANTIS--
--I'LL HEAR YOU SCREAM INSTEAD!
AAAIEE
WHAT'S THIS? AGAIN, THE SNAKE'S HEAD...
THE TERRIBLE, BEADY EYES-- VENOMOUS EVEN IN DEATH!
BRULE-- WAS A-- SNAKE-PRIEST!
BUT, IF BRULE WAS A SERPENT-MAN, THEN WHAT OF KA-NU? CAN HE TRUST ANY LONGER THE WORDS OF THE ONE HE THOUGHT A PICT?
CAN HE TRUST AUGHT.. SAVE HIS CRIMSONED BLADE?
8











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IF I WERE TO BETRAY YOU, I'D DESERVE NO BETTER-- BUT I SHALL NOT.
WAIT! DO YOU SENSE SOMETHING --SOME AWFUL PRESENCE?
SOMETHING WHICH SETS MY FLESH TO CRAWLING-- MY HAIR TO STAND ON EDGE.
I DO, PICT-- SOMETHING WHICH COMES THIS WAY--BUT MAKES NO SOUND.

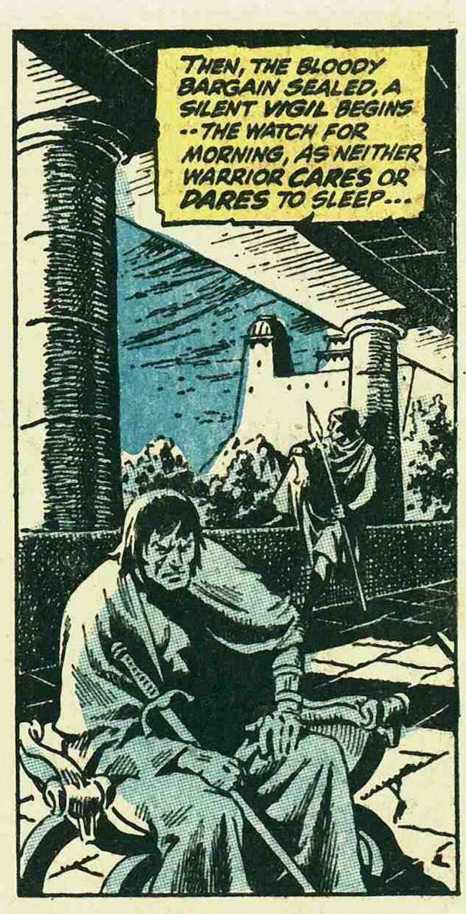

IT WOULD SEEM THESE DANK CORRIDORS ARE MORE FULL OF LIFE THAN MY THRONE ROOM--BUT WHO---
I KNOW NO MORE THAN YOU, KULL.
EVEN KA-NU, WHOSE SPIES HAVE LEARNED MUCH, WARNED ME NOT OF--THIS!
THRU THE STONE-GREY PASSAGE IT COMES--A SHAPE LIKE UNTO A MAN, BUT MISTY AND ILLUSIVE--GROWING MORE TANGIBLE AS IT DRAWS NEARER, YET NEVER WHOLLY SOLID---


AND NOW, A PAIR OF SUNKEN EYES, THAT HOLD THE TORTURES OF MANY CENTURIES--AND NO MENACE IN THOSE EYES, BUT ONLY A GREAT SADNESS--
BUT, THAT FACE-- THAT FACE--!


KULL-- SPEAK THE WORDS I TAUGHT YOU-- THEN SMITE HIM WITH YOUR SWORD.
"KA NAMA KAA LAJERMA!"--AND --SO!
NO MAN WAS THAT-- BUT A GHOST.
WHAT? MY BLADE SLICES THRU HIM LIKE AIR--AND HE VANISHES!


ALMIGHTY GODS! PICT! DID YOU NOT KNOW THAT FACE?
THAT WAS EALLAL--THE KING WHO REIGNED A THOUSAND YEARS PAST--AND WAS FOUND HIDEOUSLY MURDERED IN HIS THRONE ROOM.
THEN, STILL ANOTHER DREAD LEGEND IS PROVEN TRUE.
--THAT IF A MAN BE SLAIN BY A SNAKE-MAN-- HIS GHOST BECOMES THEIR SLAVE--
--FOR ALL ETERNITY!
10


BUT MANY SERPENT-PRIESTS SHALL DIE ERE THEY GAIN BRULE'S SPIRIT.
PICT, I THINK PERHAPS I'VE JUDGED YOU ILL BEFORE NOW.
HARK YE--- SWEAR THAT, IF I AM WOUNDED UNTO DEATH BY THOSE FOUL MONSTERS--
--YOU'LL SMITE YOUR SPEAR THRU MY BREAST, LEST MY SOUL BE ENSLAVED.

I SWEAR, KULL.
AND YOU DO THE SAME BY ME.
IT IS DONE.. BRULE THE SPEAR-SLAYER.

THEN, THE BLOODY BARGAIN SEALED, A SILENT VIGIL BEGINS --THE WATCH FOR MORNING, AS NEITHER WARRIOR CARES OR DARES TO SLEEP---

YET, FOR ALL THEIR WATCHFUL-NESS-- WHEN THE PAIR ACCOST THE RED SLAYERS IN THE DAWN'S FIRST LIGHT---
--BUT WHY, SIRE, DO YOU HAVE EACH OF SAY THE WORDS, "KA NAMA KAA LAJERAMA"?
THESE ARE-- TRUE MEN, KING.
BUT-- WHEN WAS THE EXCHANGE MADE?
EXCHANGE, SIRE?
WE HAVE EACH OF US STOOD GUARD HERE ALL NIGHT.
MYSTERY PILES HARD UPON MYSTERY-- YET NEITHER SPEAKS OF WHAT HE KNOWS TO ANOTHER-- NOT EVEN TO THE TRUSTED SERVITORS WHO PREPARE KULL FOR THE DUTIES OF STATE---

--NAY, NOT EVEN TO THE CHIEF COUN-CILORS TU-- LIVING IMAGE OF THE SLAIN SNAKE-MAN-- WHO NOW WEL-COMES HIM TO THE HALL OF SOCIETY.
YOU LOOK TIRED, LORD KING, AS IF YOU SLEPT LITTLE LAST NIGHT.
PERHAPS COURT SHOULD BE CONVENED ANOTHER DAY.
NAY, TU. I'LL DO--- WHAT I CAME TO DO.
11.

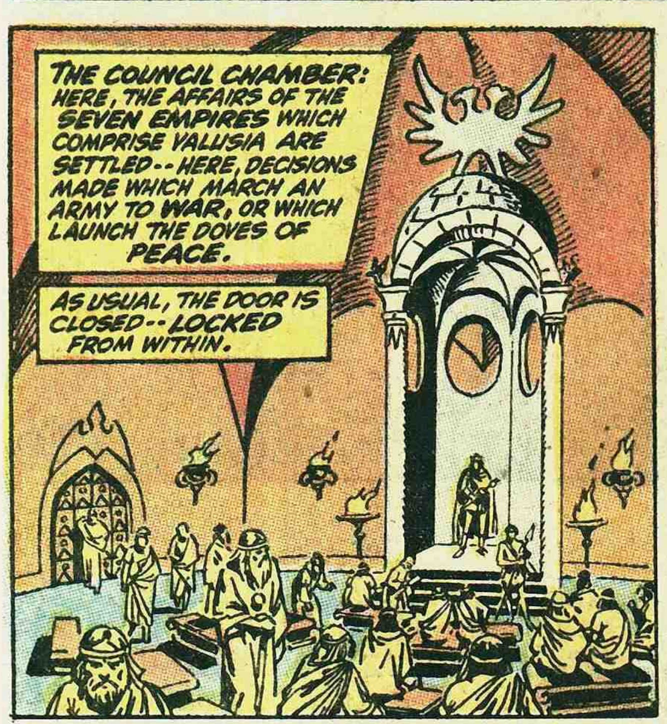

MASKS! ALWAYS, KULL HAS SEEN THE FACES OF HIS LORDS AND LADIES AS MASKS, HIDING DISTASTE FOR HIS BARBARIC ORIGINS, OR ENVY OF HIS THRONE AND SCEPTRE.
BUT NOW, A MORE SINISTER HORROR SEEMS TO LURK BENEATH THOSE SMOOTH, SMILING MASKS---


HOW MANY OF THOSE BEFORE HIM ARE, IN TRUTH, INHUMAN MONSTERS--- PLOTTING HIS DEATH, BENEATH THE MESMERIC ILLUSION OF A HUMAN FACE?
HOW MANY??
12


WHAT IS REAL, HE WONDERS? IS IT THE REAL KULL WHO SITS THE THRONE--- OR WAS IT THE REAL KULL WHO ONCE HACKED HIS WAY ACROSS THE ISLES OF THE SUNSET? IS IT EITHER OF THESE--OR IS IT--NEITHER?
LORD KING-- YOUR COUNCILORS STAND READY TO ESCORT YOU TO THE COUNCIL ROOM.

UNAPPROVING EYEBROWS ARE RAISED, AS A SURLY PICT STRIDES DEFIANTLY BESIDE THE KING-- YET, WITH LOWERED HEADS, THE COUNCILORS FALL INTO STEP BEHIND THE PAIR---
WELL, BRULE? THINK YOU OUR HIDDEN FOES WILL STRIKE AGAIN?
SO KA-NU'S SPIES SAY, KULL.
BUT WHICH OF THOSE AROUND US BE TRAITORS, AND WHICH TRUE MEN--I CANNOT SAY WITHOUT TESTING THEM.
AND TO DO THAT-- WOULD BETRAY WHAT WE KNOW.
13


SEVENTEEN MEN FOLLOW KULL AND BRULE INTO THE NEARBY CHAMBER-- PRIME COUNCILORS OF THE REALM, AFTER TU---
--EACH OF THEM A MAN WHO ESPOUSED KULL'S CAUSE, WHEN HE ASCENDED THE THRONE.


THE COUNCIL CHAMBER: HERE, THE AFFAIRS OF THE SEVEN EMPIRES WHICH COMPRISE VALUSIA ARE SETTLED-- HERE, DECISIONS MADE WHICH MARCH AN ARMY TO WAR, OR WHICH LAUNCH THE DOVES OF PEACE.
AS USUAL, THE DOOR IS CLOSED-- LOCKED FROM WITHIN.

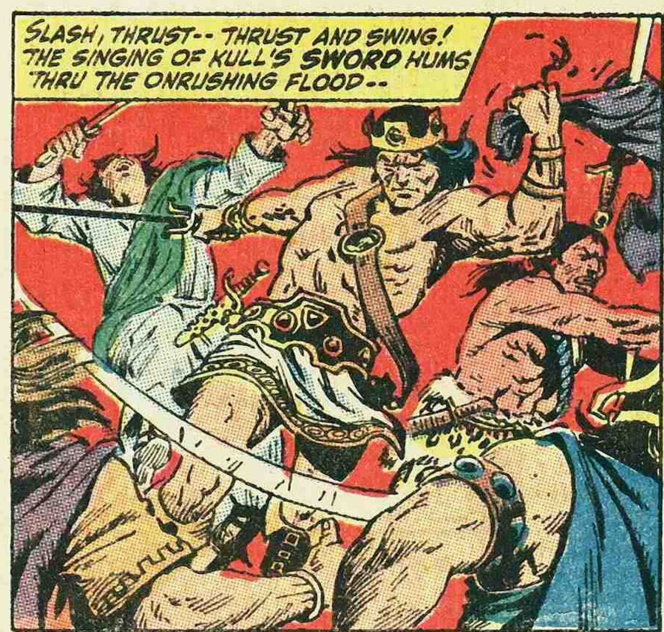

AND, AS USUAL, THE COUNCILORS SEAT THEMSELVES IN ORDER OF RANK BEFORE THE DAIS WHERE STANDS THEIR KING.
"SURELY NOT THESE MEN," GROANS KULL INWARDLY. "SURELY NOT THESE!"


MOST GIFTED MINDS OF VALUSIA---
HE PAUSES. AS A MAN, THE ADVISORS HAVE ARISEN-- NOW MOVE SLOWLY, WORDLESSLY TOWARD HIM. BUT HE GOES ON...
I HAVE SUMMONED YOU HERE, THAT I MAY SPEAK THESE WORDS TO YOU---


"KA NAMA KAA LAJERAMA!"
SO--YOU RECOIL-- AND NOW YOU DRAW GLEAMING BLADES.
HE KNOWS! THEN, LET HIM DIE NOW-- NOW!
SLAY, KULL--
14













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YES-- MANY!
BUT NOT FOR LONG! NOT FOR LONG!
HSSSSS


YET, FOR ALL HIS MIGHTY ARM AND DEATH-DEALING BLADE, KULL WOULD PERISH HERE-- BUT FOR THE MAN WHO CROUCHES AT HIS SIDE, PARRYING AND THRUSTING---
--AS, TIME AND AGAIN, THE PICT TURNS A BLOW MEANT FOR A SOVEREIGN'S HEART.


FOR, THE KING IS CLEAR BERSERK, FIGHTING IN THE TERRIBLE ATLANTEAN WAY, THAT SEEKS DEATH TO DEAL DEATH-- NO THOUGHT GIVEN TO DEFENSE, BUT ONLY TO THE SLAYING.
ONE LAST TIME, HE FEELS METAL GRAZE HIS ARM--EVEN AS HIS SWORD CLEAVES A FLASHING ARC---


--AND THEN, FOR A FLEETING MOMENT, ALL IS STILL IN THE GREAT CHAMBER.
VALKA, WHAT A BATTLE WAS THIS-- SUCH AS I'VE NOT SEEN SINCE FIRST I SAT THE TOPAZ THRONE!
BUT--HAD THESE BEEN WARRIORS-- TRAINED IN THE USE OF STEEL---
--WE HAD DIED HERE THIS MORN--IN YOUR OWN COUNCIL ROOM.
16


KULL-- WAIT! THIS--IS NOT THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.
NAY. EVEN AS YOU SPEAK, THE FOGS FADE--AND I SEE---


THIS IS THE ROOM WHERE EALLAL FELL 'NEATH THE ASSASSINS' KNIVES --A THOUSAND YEARS AGO--
--UNUSED SINCE, AND EVER NAMED--"ACCURSED"!


THEN, THEY'VE TRICKED US, AFTER ALL--AND WE WALKED LIKE FOOLS INTO THEIR AMBUSH.
EASY, KING. YOUR WOUNDS--
THEY ARE--NOTHING.


THERE IS MORE SERPENT-DEVILTRY AFOOT, BRULE.
BUT, IF THERE BE TRUE MEN LEFT IN THE PALACE, THEY WILL BE IN THE REAL COUNCIL ROOM NOW.
COME!


TIME DRAWS NO BREATH, AS BATTLE-MADDENED PICT AND ATLANTEAN FLY THRU DESERTED HALLS-- THEN HALT WITH GHASTLY SHUDDERS BEFORE A TOO-FAMILIAR DOOR---
FOR, WITHIN THE COUNCIL ROOM, A VOICE IS SPEAKING---


--AND THAT VOICE IS KULL'S!
HOLD, IMPOSTOR!
OUR KING! WHO SAVE HE COULD HAVE SMASHED THUS THRU A BOLTED DOOR?
BUT IF SO--THEN WHO SPEAKS FROM THE DAIS?
17.

THERE BE NO SORCERERS AMONG THE LORD COUNCILORS OF ANCIENT VALUSIA--- FOR, IF ANY THERE WERE, THEY WOULD ASK NO VAIN QUERIES, BUT RATHER THEIR WARLOCK EYES WOULD SEE---
---SEE THE MYSTIC AURA OF THE TIGER-TOTEM, SOLE VESTIGE OF KULL'S BARBARIAN HERITAGE, DESCEND UPON HIS MASSIVE SHOULDERS LIKE A MANY-STRIPED CLOAK---
--AS HE STRIDES CATLIKE TOWARD THE VIPEROUS MAN-FORM BEFORE HIM--!









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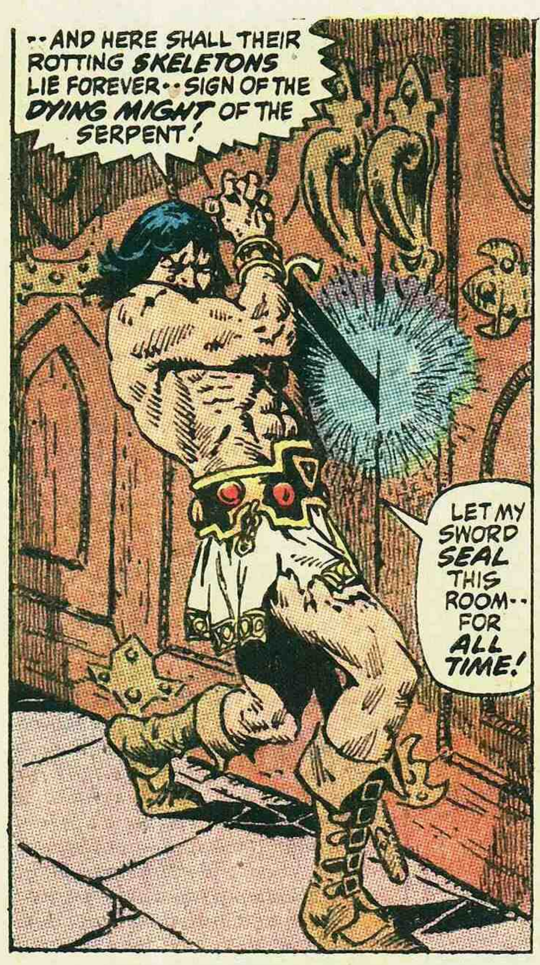

A PURPLE HAZE DIZZIES KULL. STILL, WITH THE STRENGTH BORN OF COURAGE, HE LIFTS HIGH THE NOW-SERPENT-HEADED CORPSE---
MEN OF VALUSIA--YOU HAVE SEEN TREACHERY REPAID, WITH YOUR OWN EYES.
NOW DO YOU BELIEVE THAT I AM TRULY KULL--LORD OF THE SEVEN EMPIRES?
KA NAMA KAA LAJERAMA!


FOR AN ETERNAL MOMENT, SEVENTEEN FURROWED FACES FROWN IN UNCERTAINTY--AND EVEN KULL WONDERS FOR AN INSTANT IF THESE BE TRUE MEN OR NO---


BUT THEN, LIKE BOOMING THUNDER--
ALL HAIL, KING KULL! DEATH TO THE FOES OF VALUSIA!


NEXT, SHAKING OFF EVEN BRULE'S OFFERED SUPPORT, THE BLEEDING MONARCH HOISTS THE INHUMAN CARCASS OVER ONE SHOULDER, AND---
FOLLOW ME.


LORD KING--- WHO ARE THESE OTHER MAN-SERPENTS, AS DEAD AS THAT IMPOSTOR?
AND WHERE--TO WHAT CHAMBER HAVE YOU LED US?
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THE ACCURSED ROOM--WHERE GOOD KING EALLAL DIED, TEN CENTURIES AGO?
HERE THE SNAKE-HEADS SLEW ONE KING--
--AND TRIED TO SLAY ANOTHER--
19


--AND HERE SHALL THEIR ROTTING SKELETONS LIE FOREVER--SIGN OF THE DYING MIGHT OF THE SERPENT!
LET MY SWORD SEAL THIS ROOM--FOR ALL TIME!


HERE AND NOW, I DO SWEAR--THAT I SHALL HUNT THE SNAKE-MEN FROM LAND TO LAND--FROM SEA TO SEA---
--GIVING NO REST, NO QUARTER--TILL ALL BE SLAIN--AND THEIR POWER BE BROKEN!
THUS DO I VOW--I--KULL--KING OF--VALUSIA--


HE IS DAZED. OUR KING IS SORELY HURT--!
KULL--LET ME---
NO, BRULE. STAND YOU BACK.


OUR PACT--NEED NOT BE KEPT--NOT THIS DAY.
I--HAVE WOUNDS---BUT NONE OF THEM MORTAL.
A FEW DAYS' REST--THEN LET THE SERPENT-PRIESTS BEWARE--!
AYE, KULL. 'TWILL BE A RARE HUNT, INDEED.

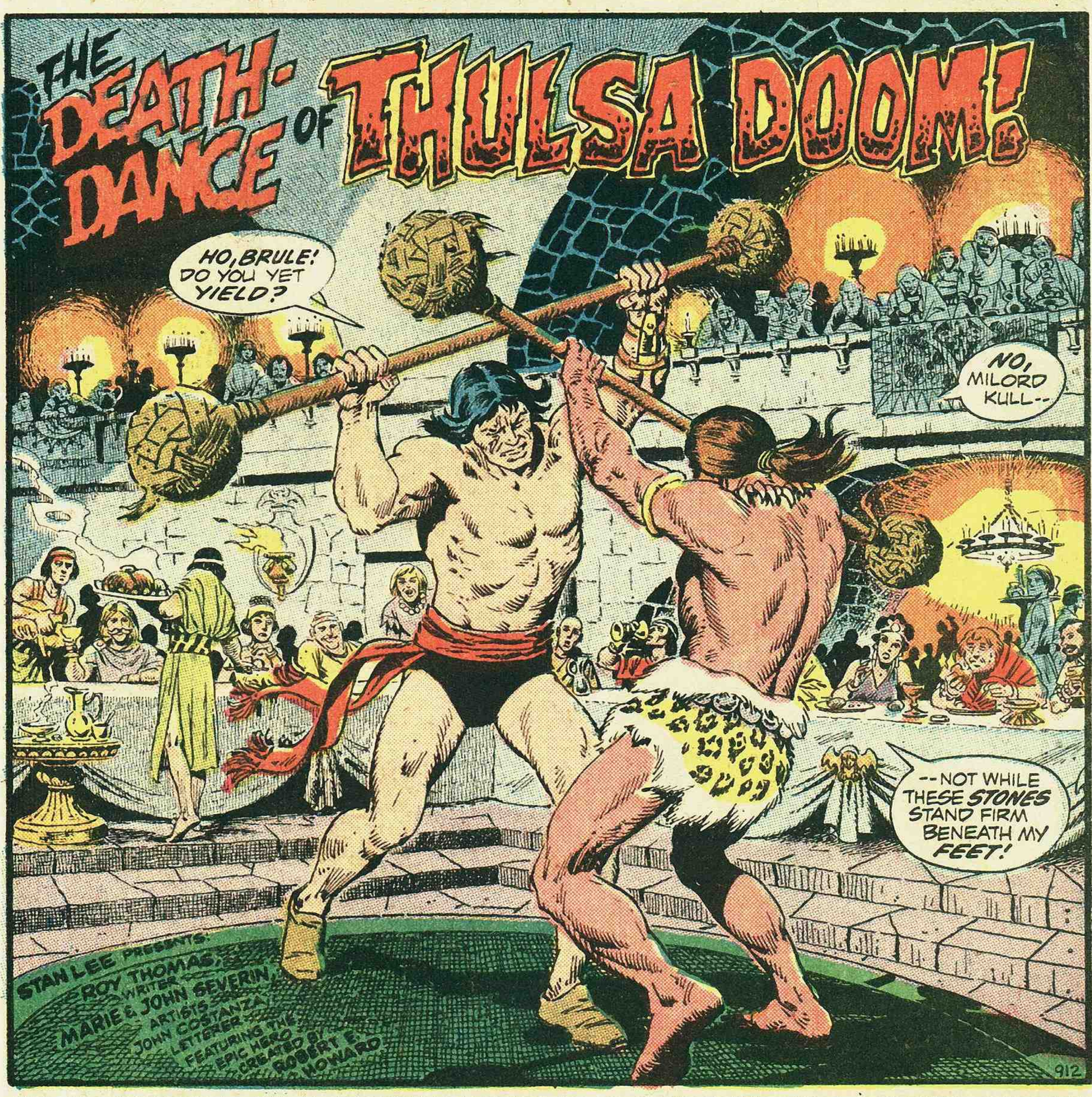

PICT--SHOULD WE NOT GO AFTER HIM? SHOULD--?
NAY, GREYBEARD. SUCH A MAN AS THIS IS NOT SO EASILY KILLED.
VALKA, BUT I SEE LONG, RICH YEARS AHEAD FOR ALL VALUSIA---


--WITH SUCH AS KULL UPON THE TOPAZ THRONE!
20.
Finis

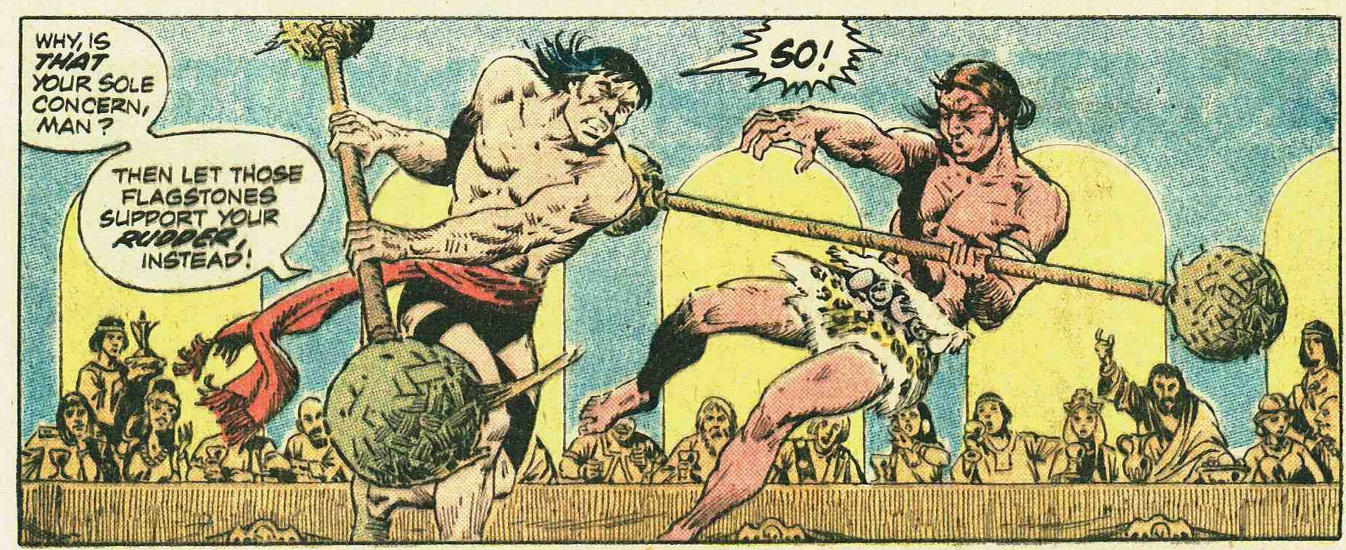
KULL THE CONQUEROR!™

VALUSIA WALKS IN SUNSHINE ONCE AGAIN! NO LONGER DOES THE VIPER COWL OF THE SERPENT BROOD LIE HEAVY OVER THE CITY OF WONDERS... AND IN THE PALACE ROYAL, EVEN SKULKING SHADOWS SEEM TO HAVE BEEN EXILED FOREVERMORE.

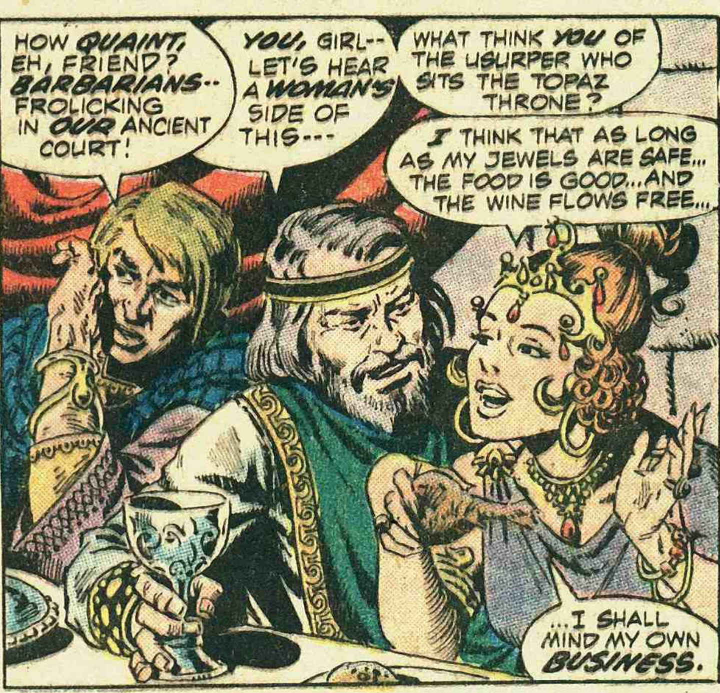
AYE... SO IT SEEMS...!



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WHY, IS THAT YOUR SOLE CONCERN, MAN?
THEN LET THOSE FLAGSTONES SUPPORT YOUR RUDDER, INSTEAD!
SO!


...WELL CONTESTED, GOOD FRIEND! WE ATLANTEANS HAVE IT ALL OVER YOU PICTS IN HEIGHT AND WEIGHT--
-- YET I'D SOONER FACE A REGIMENT OF SOFT-SINEWED VALUSIANS THAN ONE OF YOUR HARD-HONED RACE.
I'LL LONG FAVOR THIS SHOULDER, I KNOW.
NOT SO, KULL. YOU SHOW NOTHING ANY FAVOR-ITISM...
...AS MY ACHING EXTREMITIES WILL TESTIFY!

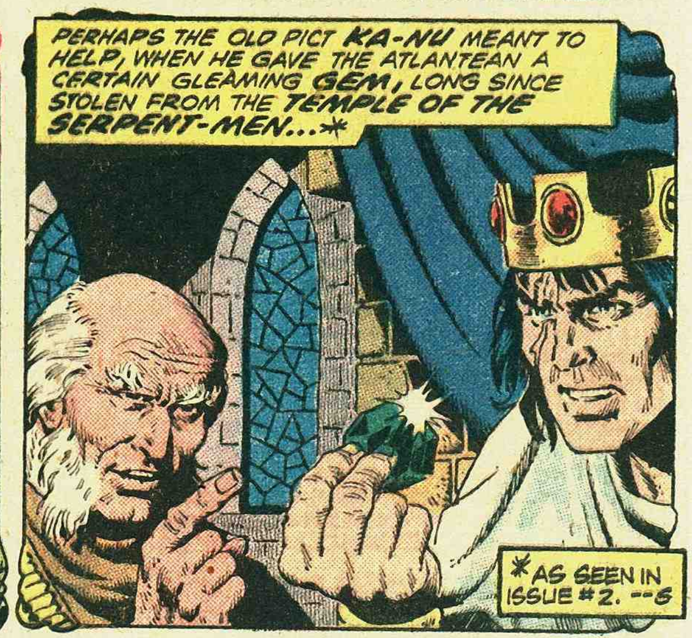

HOW QUAINT, EH, FRIEND? BARBARIANS-- FROLICKING IN OUR ANCIENT COURT!
YOU, GIRL-- LET'S HEAR A WOMAN'S SIDE OF THIS---
WHAT THINK YOU OF THE USURPER WHO SITS THE TOPAZ THRONE?
I THINK THAT AS LONG AS MY JEWELS ARE SAFE... THE FOOD IS GOOD...AND THE WINE FLOWS FREE...
...I SHALL MIND MY OWN BUSINESS.


UH OH! THAT WINDBAG TU RISES TO SPEAK.
VALKA PRESERVE US FROM THE PONTIFICATIONS OF CHIEF COUNCILORS!
FRIENDS OF THE COURT-- THIS IS AN OCCASION MOST JOYOUS TO US ALL. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MEMORY, VALUSIA IS FREE OF THE CONNIVING AND PLOTTING OF THE SNAKE-MEN!
OUR THANKS-- AND OUR PRAYERS-- GO OUT TO KING KULL!
2













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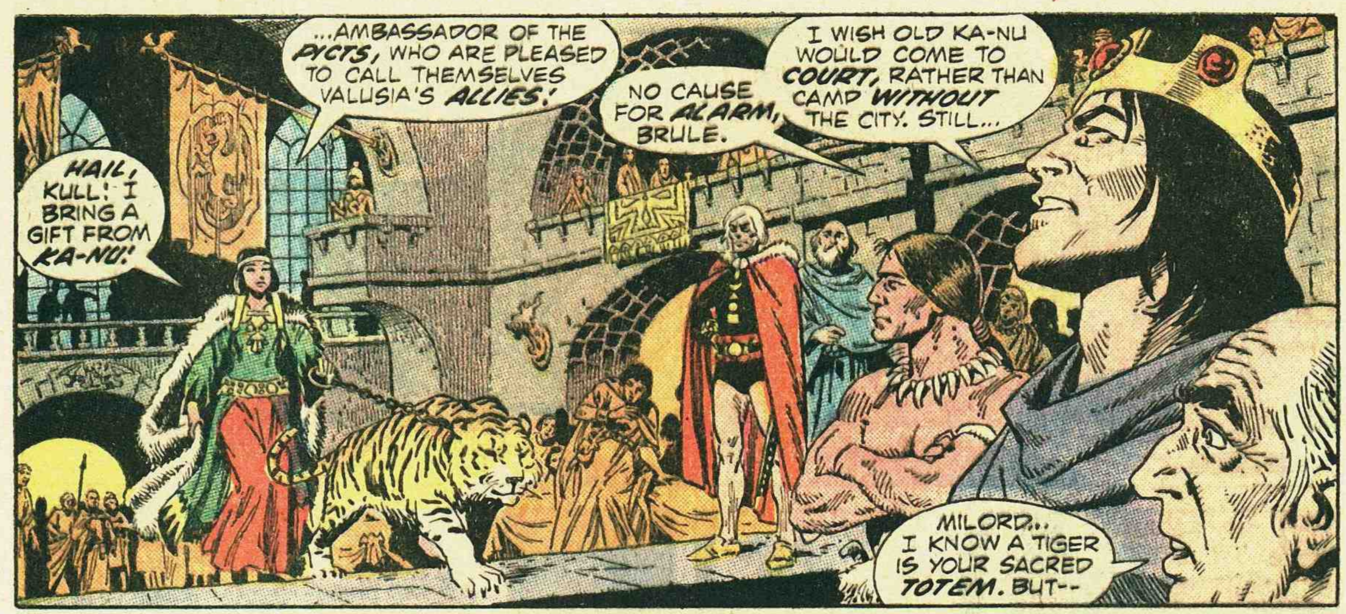

SOMETHING I FEAR YOU CAN ILL AFFORD, KULL, WHILE THULSA DOOM IS A GUEST IN YOUR COURT.
HE CLAIMS TO COME FROM DISTANT GRONDAR... BUT I TRUST HIM NOT.
YOU MAY BE RIGHT, MY FRIEND.
STILL, I FOUND HIM GRIEVING OVER THE BODY OF ONE HE SAYS WAS HIS BETROTHED, SLAIN BY THE SNAKE-MEN...
AND, UNTIL HE PROVES HIMSELF TREACH-EROUS...


HO! HE RISES TO SPEAK.
LORDS AND LADIES-- GREAT KULL-- LET ME GIVE BOTH TOAST AND PROPHECY!
THOUGH BORN IN A CLIME AS FAR-OFF AS MY OWN, KULL HAS BEEN A GOOD SOVER-EIGN TO HIS ADOPTED PEOPLE.


NOW LOOK YE, VALUSIANS, AT HOW THE MOON ITSELF GROWS DARK-- JUST AS YOUR LAND WAS TRANSGRESSED OF LATE BY THE SERPENT-PRIESTS.
BUT NOW KULL WALKS AMONG YOU-- KULL THE KING--
KULL THE CONQUEROR--


-- AND NOW THE MOON'S WHITE EYE LOOKS DOWN IN JOY ONCE MORE-- UPON THE CITY OF WONDERS!


VALKA! 'TIS AMAZING, IS IT NOT, MAJESTY?
THIS SHOWS GREAT MAGIC UPON THE SIDE OF VALUSIA! IT SHOWS--
IT SHOWS... SOMETHING, TU.
BUT IS IT THE MAN WHO MOVES THE STARS-- OR DOES HE POSSESS SOME SECRET KNOWLEDGE, MERELY--
--AND USE IT TO FURTHER UNKNOWN ENDS?
MILORD-- BEHOLD--!
4


HAIL, KULL! I BRING A GIFT FROM KA-NU!
...AMBASSADOR OF THE PICTS, WHO ARE PLEASED TO CALL THEMSELVES VALUSIA'S ALLIES!
NO CAUSE FOR ALARM, BRULE.
I WISH OLD KA-NU WOULD COME TO COURT, RATHER THAN CAMP WITHOUT THE CITY. STILL...
MILORD... I KNOW A TIGER IS YOUR SACRED TOTEM. BUT--


THEN, EVEN AS FALSETTO SYLLABLES DANCE, UNVOICED, ON TU'S AGED TONGUE...
THE BEAST-- GOES MAD!!
NO, GREAT ONE--
RRRRR

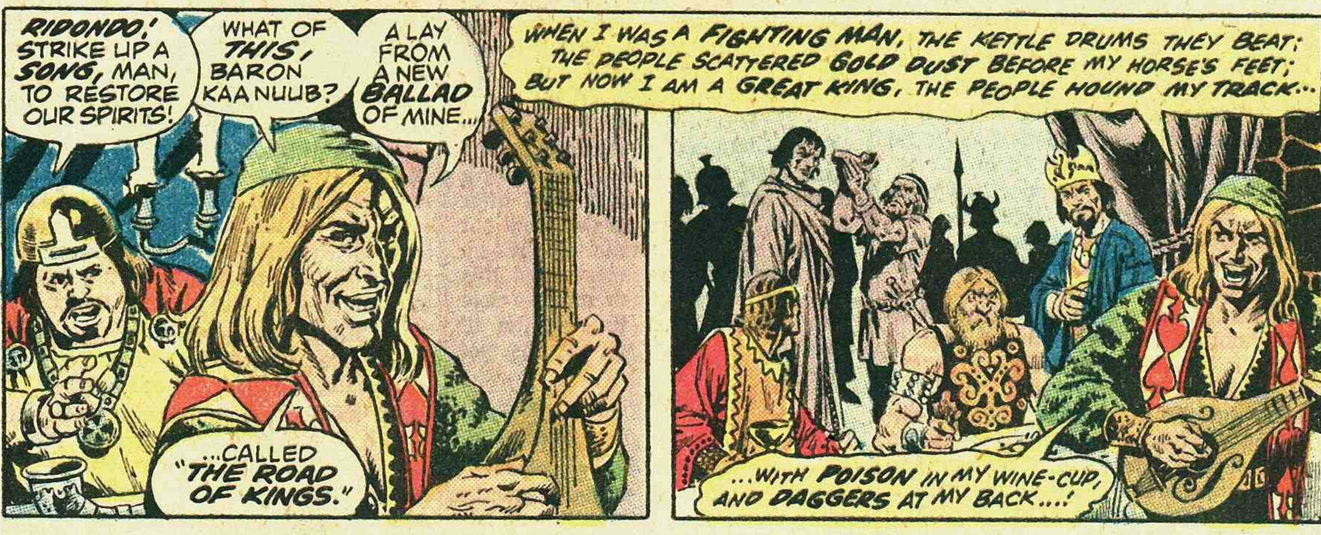

NOOOO!


THE JUNGLE-CAT ATTACKS THULSA DOOM!
ONE SWEEP OF A TIGER'S CLAWS CAN FELL AN OX-- OR DISEMBOWEL A WATER BUFFALO.
WE MUST STRIKE, BRULE-- AND STRIKE QUICKLY--


--ERE IT BE TOO LATE!!
5













CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE


ELSEWHERE IN THE PALACE, SOON AFTER...
MILORD DOOM-- YOUR WOUND SEEMS-- ALREADY HEALED--!?
I HAVE MY OWN WAYS, DEAR SHIVA.
BUT--YOU ARE THE KING'S FAVORITE, ARE YOU NOT?
COME NEARER, THEN, AND TELL ME IF YOU'VE E'ER SEEN AUGHT LIKE...


...THIS!
WHY, YES, MILORD. KULL HIMSELF HAS ITS DOUBLE!
YET, EVEN IT NEVER SEEMED... TO SHINE... SO BRIGHT...!


BECAUSE A SAVAGE WIELDS IT, WOMAN... NOT THULSA DOOM!
NOW GAZE INTO ITS UNPLUMBED DEPTHS...AND LISTEN WELL TO ME...


...BRULE, WHY DOES KULL SEND EVEN YOU FROM HIS SIDE TONIGHT?
HE HAS NEED TO BE ALONE...TO THINK.

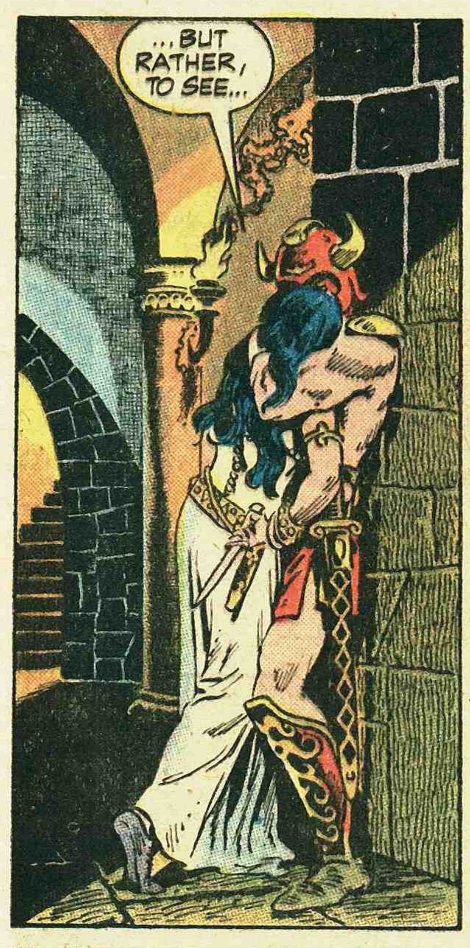

AND LET US PRAY...
...TO GODS OF PICTDOM AND VALUSIA...


...THAT HIS JUDGEMENT IS THE EQUAL OF HIS SWORD-ARM!


TIME SLITHERS SLOWLY THRU DANK CORRIDORS. THEN, TOWARD DAWN...
AWAKEN, ARCTORUS. DOES KULL KNOW YOU DOZE AT HIS PRIVATE DOORWAY?
WHAT--? WHO--?


SHIVA! BUT-- YOU DID NOT GIVE THE CHOSEN PASSWORD.
THAT MEANS, THE KING HAS NOT SENT FOR YOU THIS NIGHT...
PERHAPS OTHERS BESIDES HE HOLD CHARMS FOR SHIVA, ARCTORUS...

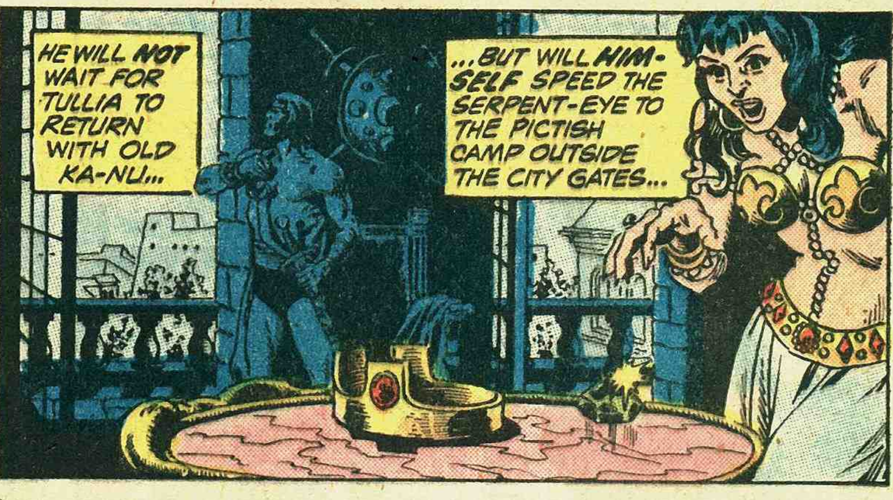

PERHAPS I'VE NOT COME TO SEE THE KING, AT ALL...
7


...BUT RATHER, TO SEE...

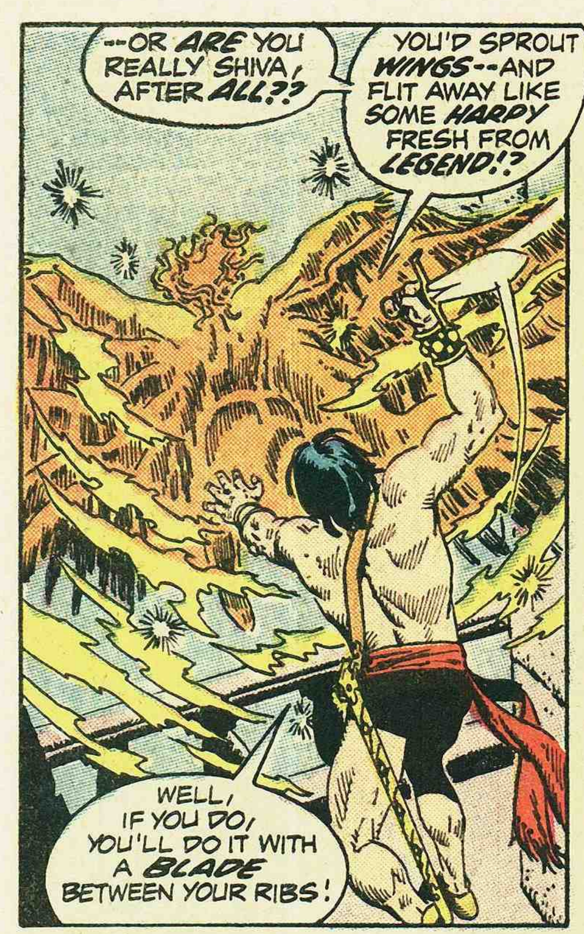

--YOU!!


THE BODY OF THE FALLEN GUARD IS CUMBERSOME... YET GREAT IS THE STRENGTH BORN OF ENCHANTMENT, AND SO IT IS WELL HIDDEN ERE KULL DOES COME...


KULL...WHOSE SIMPLE BARBARIAN MIND NO GLITTERING CROWN CAN PURGE OF ITS SHADOWED CORNERS...
KULL...WHO PEERS DEEPLY, DARKLY AT THE ANCIENT GEM FOR WHICH NAMELESS NATIONS HAVE FOUGHT AND PERISHED...
...AND WHO MAKES A SUDDEN DECISION:


HE WILL NOT WAIT FOR TULLIA TO RETURN WITH OLD KA-NU...
...BUT WILL HIMSELF SPEED THE SERPENT-EYE TO THE PICTISH CAMP OUTSIDE THE CITY GATES...


...IF, INDEED, IT REMAINS TO TAKE!
EH--? SHIVA!
PUT THAT JEWEL DOWN, GIRL! I'VE GIVEN YOU OTHERS ENOUGH!
THAT ONE'S NOT FOR THE LIKES OF YOU--
8











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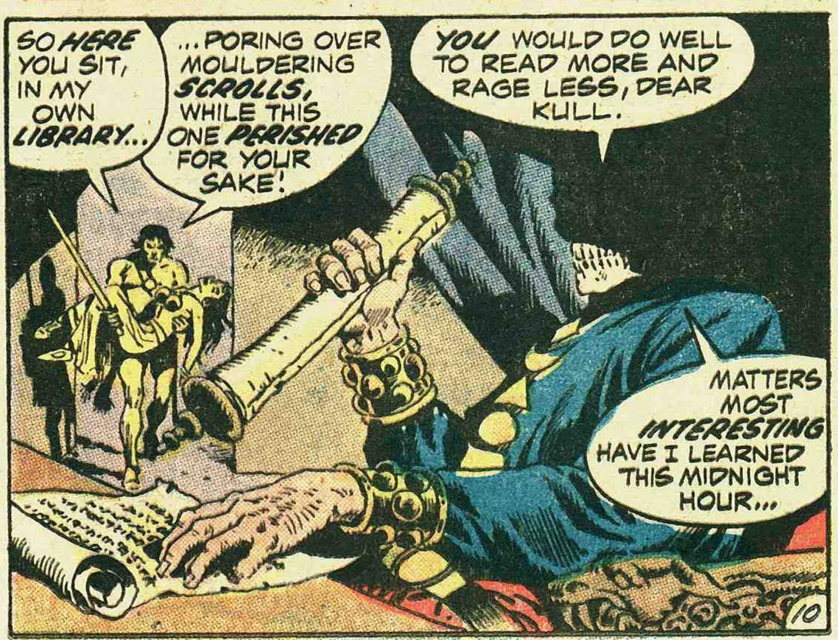

AND WHAT OF SHIVA? THE ICY GRIP OF TERROR NUMBS EVEN THE MOST POTENT OF SPELLS... AND SO THE TRANSFORMATION IS REVERSED...
AAIIEEEE
...FROM SOARING FOWL TO HALF-HUMAN HARPY...
...AND BACK TO FRIGHTENED, FAST-HURTLING GIRL!


MEANWHILE, IS IT BRISK WINDS OF FORTUNE, OR THE POWER OF THE STOLEN JEWEL, WHICH GUIDES THE KING'S OWN FALL...
...LIFTS THRUSTING BRANCHES TO SLOW HIS DESCENT, SO THAT HE LANDS BRUISED AND BATTERED...
...YET ALIVE!?


HE KNOWS NOT, NOR DOES HE CARE. FOR EVEN AS HIS STRONG RIGHT HAND GRASPS THE SACRED GEM MORE TIGHTLY, HIS FIRST THOUGHTS ARE ONLY OF...


SHIVA--!


IT WAS SHE... AND SHE IS DEAD! I SEE THULSA DOOM'S FINE HAND IN THIS.
HE'LL ANSWER WHAT I ASK THIS NIGHT... OR PAY DEARLY FOR HIS SILENCE!


SO HERE YOU SIT, IN MY OWN LIBRARY...
...PORING OVER MOULDERING SCROLLS, WHILE THIS ONE PERISHED FOR YOUR SAKE!
YOU WOULD DO WELL TO READ MORE AND RAGE LESS, DEAR KULL.
MATTERS MOST INTERESTING HAVE I LEARNED THIS MIDNIGHT HOUR...
10









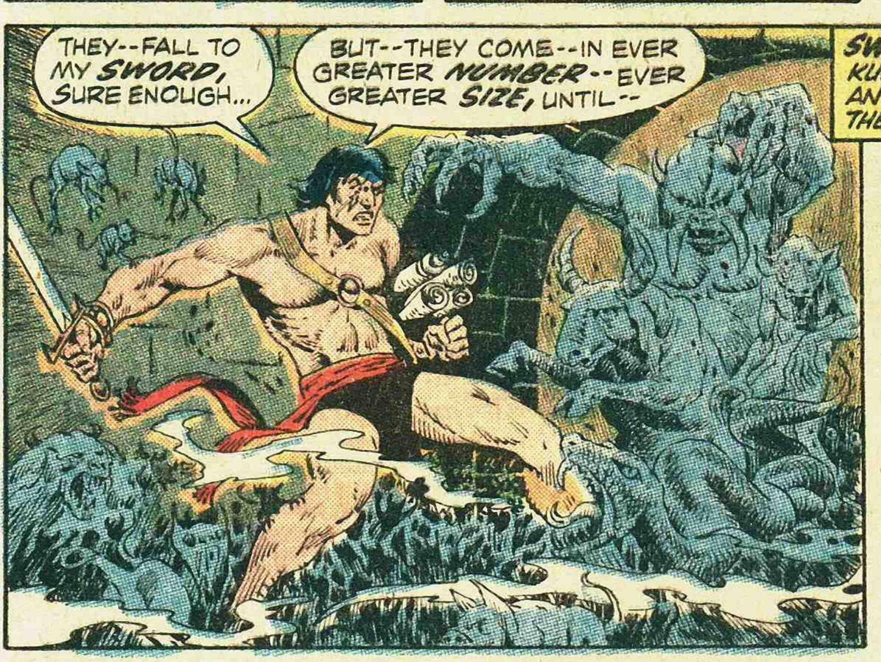


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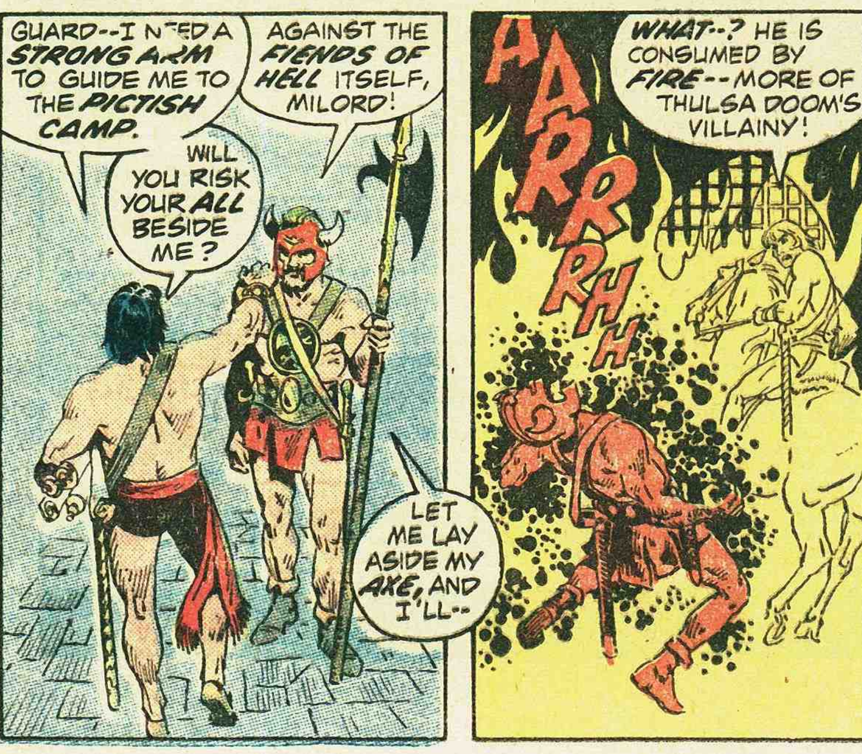

THULSA DOOM SPEAKS NO MORE...BUT FADES IN NOTHINGNESS, AMID GALES OF DEVILISH LAUGHTER---
...AND A BARBARIAN'S CURSES!


AND SO, FRUSTRATED, KULL TURNS TO OTHER THINGS...
SEE YOU TO THE GIRL'S BODY, RED SLAYER.


FOR MYSELF, I'LL TAKE THESE SINISTER SCROLLS TO--
GODS! WHAT VERMIN ARE THESE WHICH SPRING UP BENEATH MY FEET?


THEY--FALL TO MY SWORD, SURE ENOUGH...
BUT--THEY COME--IN EVER GREATER NUMBER--EVER GREATER SIZE, UNTIL--


SWEAT BLINDS KULL'S EYES... AND THEN...
VALKA! I BUT BLINK MY EYES--
--AND THE VERMIN VANISH, HAVING NO MORE POWER OVER ME!


GUARD--I NEED A STRONG ARM TO GUIDE ME TO THE PICTISH CAMP.
AGAINST THE FIENDS OF HELL ITSELF, MILORD!
WILL YOU RISK YOUR ALL BESIDE ME?
LET ME LAY ASIDE MY AXE, AND I'LL--
AARRRHH
WHAT--? HE IS CONSUMED BY FIRE--MORE OF THULSA DOOM'S VILLAINY!


WELL, I'LL SEE NO OTHER LAMB SACRIFICED AT MY SIDE.
THIS NIGHT--KULL RIDES ALONE!
12

HAH! GONE ARE THE FLAMES WHICH SEEMED TO SEAR MY FLESH-- YET, LEFT MY SKIN COOL, ALMOST REFRESHED.

AND, SINCE MY MOUNT SEEMS TO SHARE MY IMMUNITY, I'LL SOON BE--

VALKA!

A LESSER HEART THEN KULL'S WOULD SINK BENEATH THE STRAIN OF SEEING A UNIVERSE YAWN BENEATH HIS STEED'S SHOD FEET...

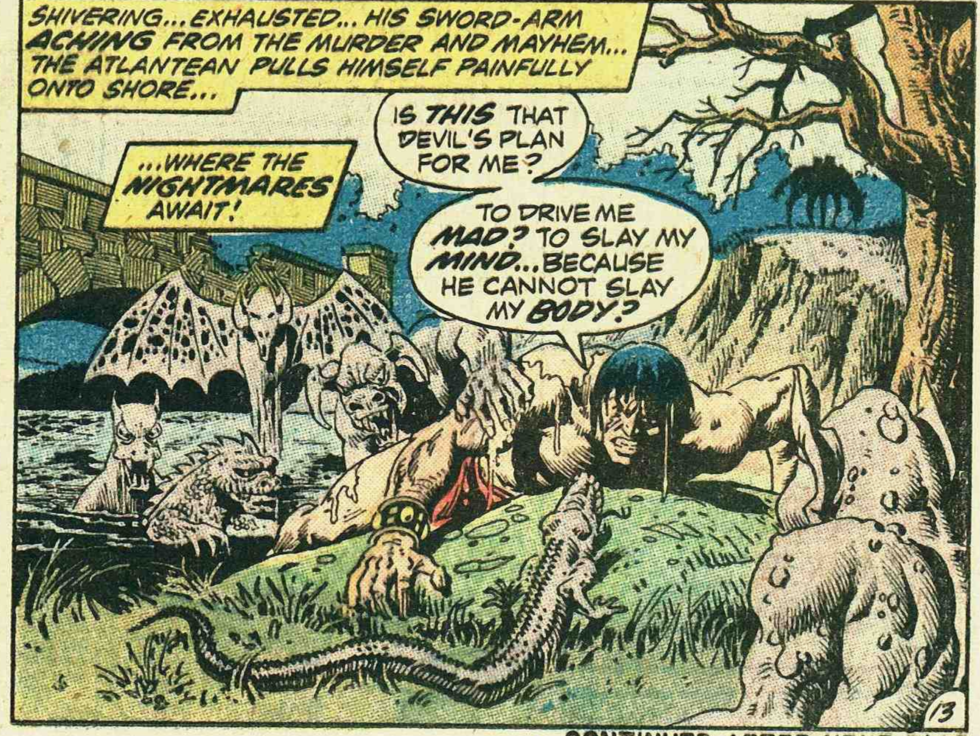
BUT THIS IS KULL! KULL!

EVEN WHEN THAT BEAST ITSELF SEEMS TO TURN TO CLACKING BONES UNDER HIM, HE SPURS IT ON...

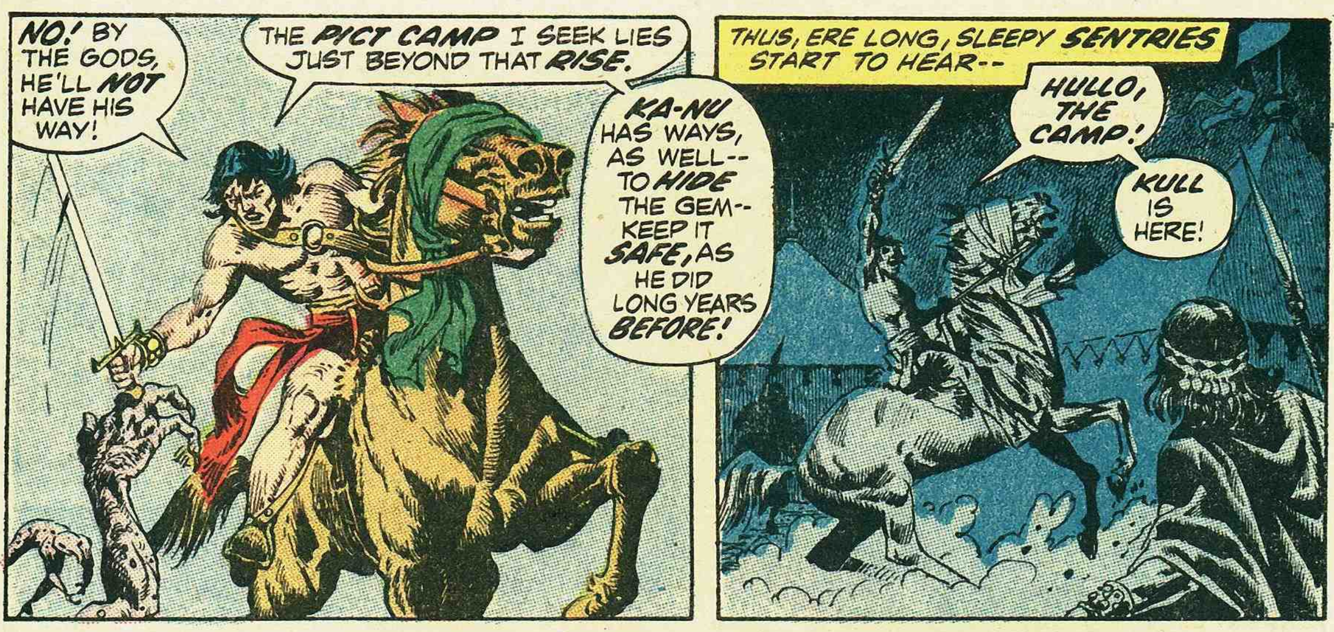
...ON AGAINST THE GRINNING DEATH'S-HEADS WHICH LOOM UP IN HIS PATH...

...ON, TILL A SUDDEN SPLASHING OF WATERS BRINGS HIM BACK TO EARTH AGAIN...





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NO! BY THE GODS, HE'LL NOT HAVE HIS WAY!
THE PICT CAMP I SEEK LIES JUST BEYOND THAT RISE.
KA-NU HAS WAYS, AS WELL-- TO HIDE THE GEM-- KEEP IT SAFE, AS HE DID LONG YEARS BEFORE!
THUS, ERE LONG, SLEEPY SENTRIES START TO HEAR--
HULLO, THE CAMP!
KULL IS HERE!

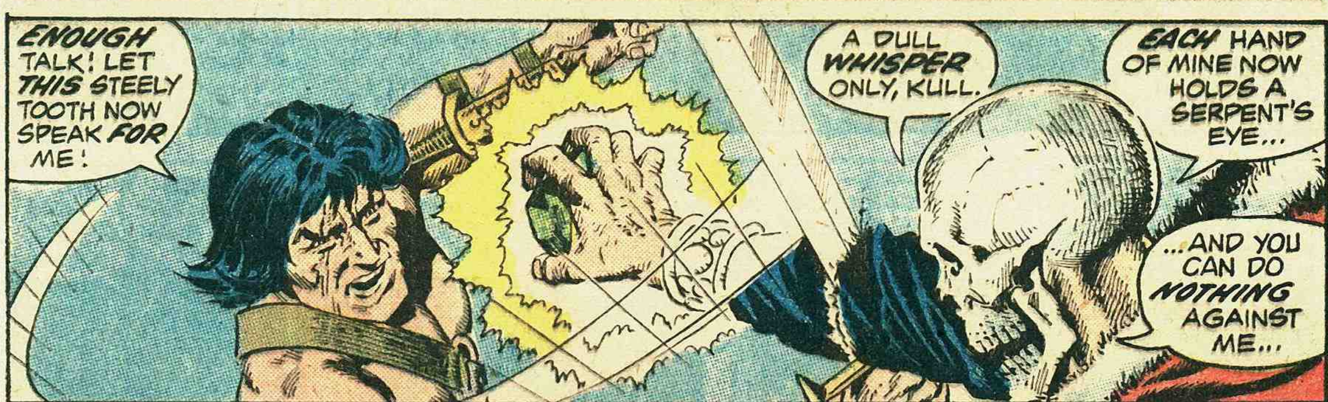

WHY DO YOU ARRIVE SO OUT OF BREATH, KULL, WHEN EARLIER YOU SPURNED KA-NU'S OFFER...?
MY PLANS-- WERE CHANGED FOR ME, BRULE.
NOW, WHERE IS KA-NU? I HAVE NEED-- OF THE WISDOM STORED IN HIS WINE-SOAKED BRAIN.
AND HE OFFERS IT AGAIN TO YOU, FOR WHAT 'TIS WORTH.
WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE, OUT-STRIPPING EVEN THE SUN?
YOU-- WERE RIGHT, KA-NU...
THE SERPENT GEM NEEDS A GUARDIAN MORE STEEPED IN ANCIENT LORE...


SO, TAKE IT... FOR ONLY WITH YOU... WILL IT BE BEYOND THE REACH OF MY ENEMY.
WELL? TAKE IT, MAN! WHY DO YOU HESITATE NOW?
NAY, NOT HESITATING, KULL... BUT MERELY...
...CONTEMPLATING.

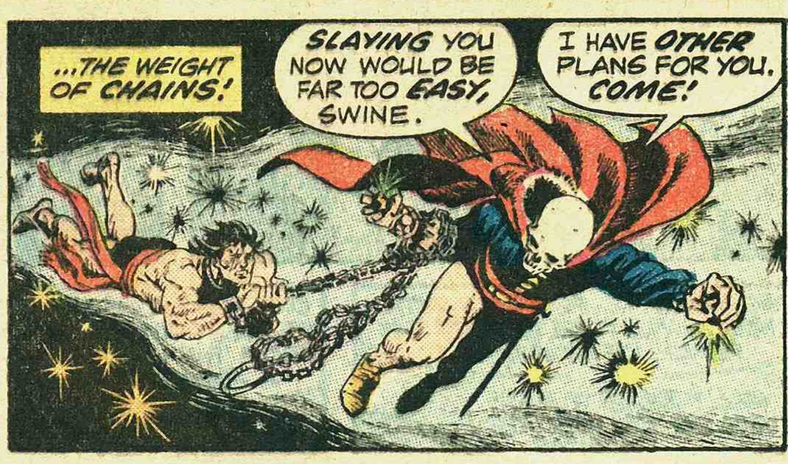

ONE MUST RELISH THE PRESENT WHICH COMES FROM THE HAND OF A FRIEND...

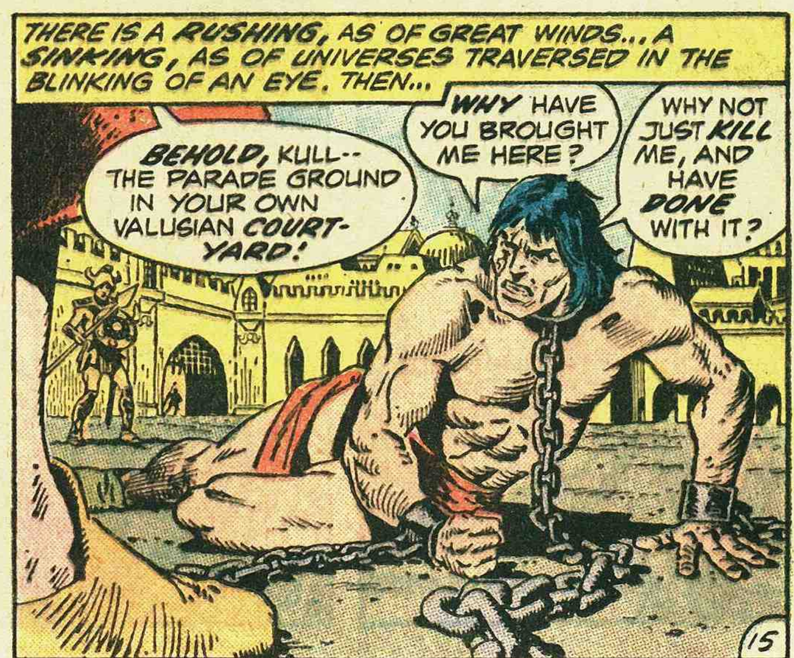

FOR, 'TIS A TRUE GIFT WHICH IS FREELY GIVEN!
14


NOW, THE PICT CAMP IS GONE, AMID A SWIRLING OF FOG AND SUDDEN, ICY MIST...
AND KULL KNOWS...
I--WAS NEVER IN KA-NU'S CAMP--AT ALL!
QUITE SO, FOOL.
I HERDED YOU HITHER, LIKE SOME LAMB RIPE FOR THE FLEECING...
...TILL YOU HANDED ME THE GEM I COULD NOT TAKE!

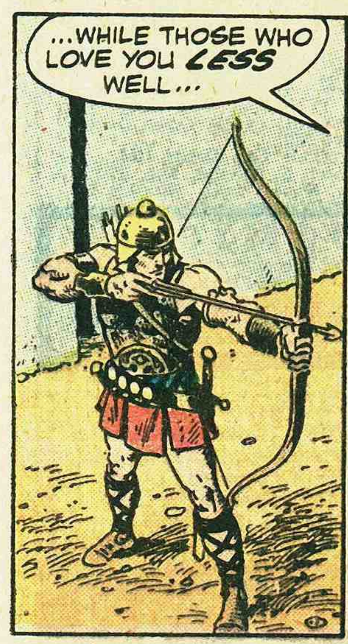

ENOUGH TALK! LET THIS STEELY TOOTH NOW SPEAK FOR ME!
A DULL WHISPER ONLY, KULL.
EACH HAND OF MINE NOW HOLDS A SERPENT'S EYE...
...AND YOU CAN DO NOTHING AGAINST ME...


--WHILE I MAY DO--WHATE'ER I PLEASE!!
THE SWORD IS SUDDENLY HOT--IT BURNS KULL'S HAND--
AND--EVEN AS HE RELEASES IT, HE IS ABRUPTLY AWARE OF A GREAT WEIGHT DRAGGING UPON HIS MIGHTY WRISTS...


...THE WEIGHT OF CHAINS!
SLAYING YOU NOW WOULD BE FAR TOO EASY, SWINE.
I HAVE OTHER PLANS FOR YOU. COME!

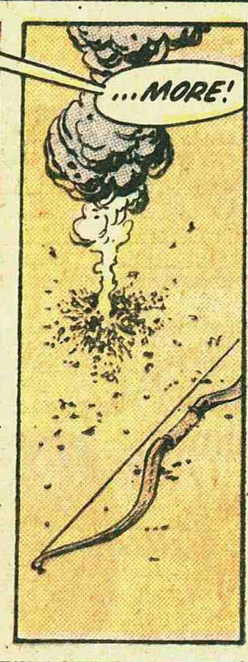

THERE IS A RUSHING, AS OF GREAT WINDS... A SINKING, AS OF UNIVERSES TRAVERSED IN THE BLINKING OF AN EYE. THEN...
BEHOLD, KULL-- THE PARADE GROUND IN YOUR OWN VALUSIAN COURT-YARD!
WHY HAVE YOU BROUGHT ME HERE?
WHY NOT JUST KILL ME, AND HAVE DONE WITH IT?
15















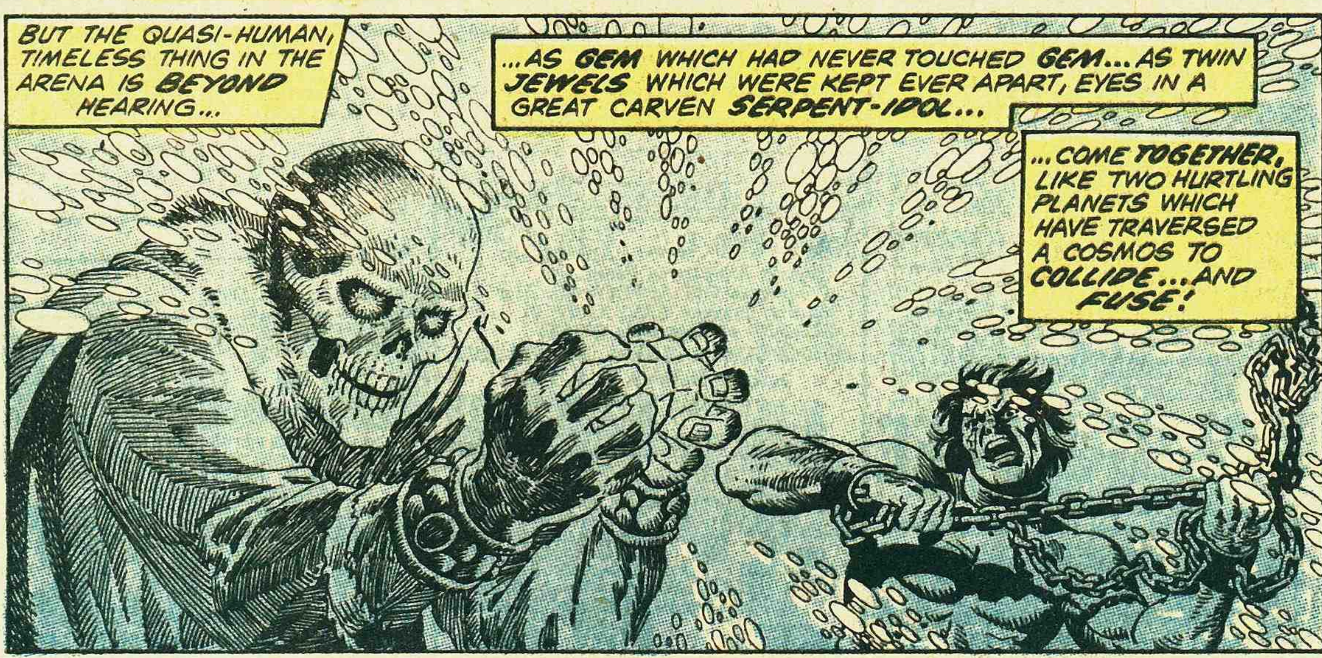


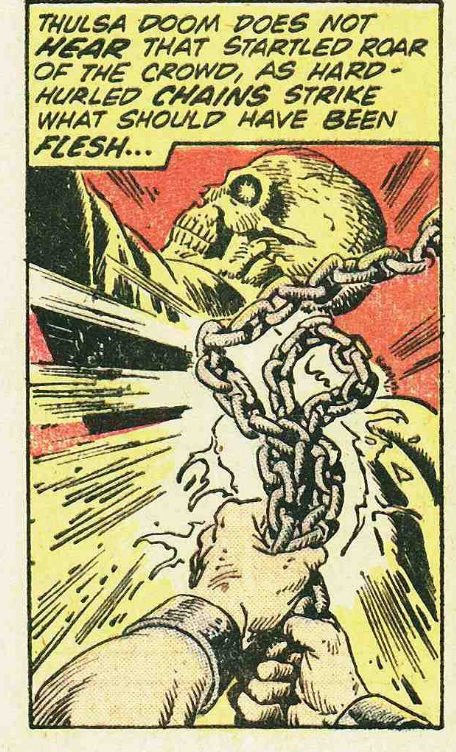
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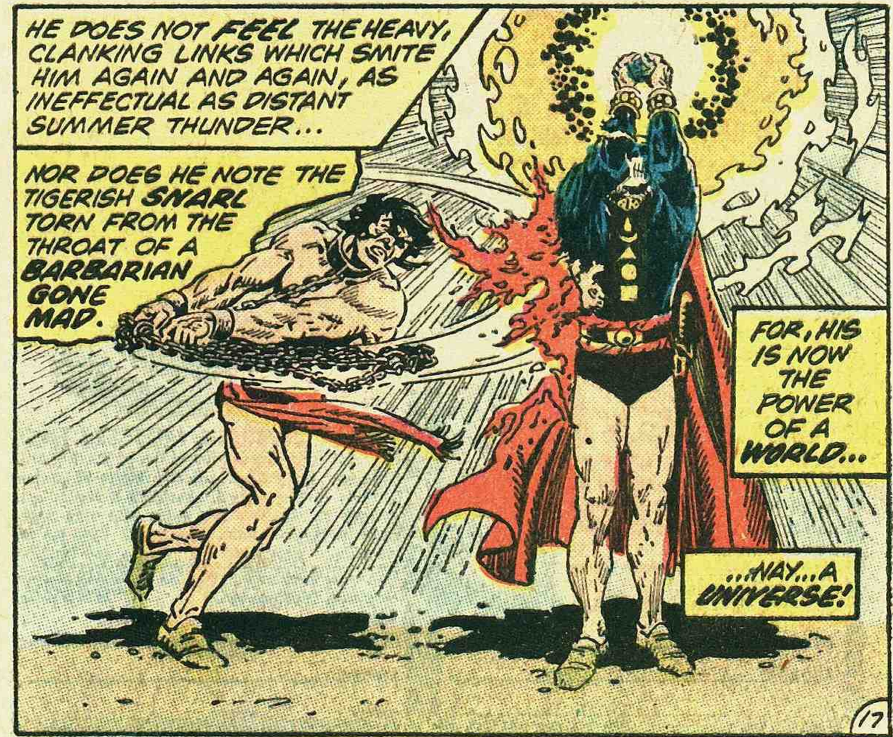

...AND AN ANCIENT, AWESOME PROPHECY IS FULFILLED!


LET THIS BE MY PRO-PHECY, FIEND...

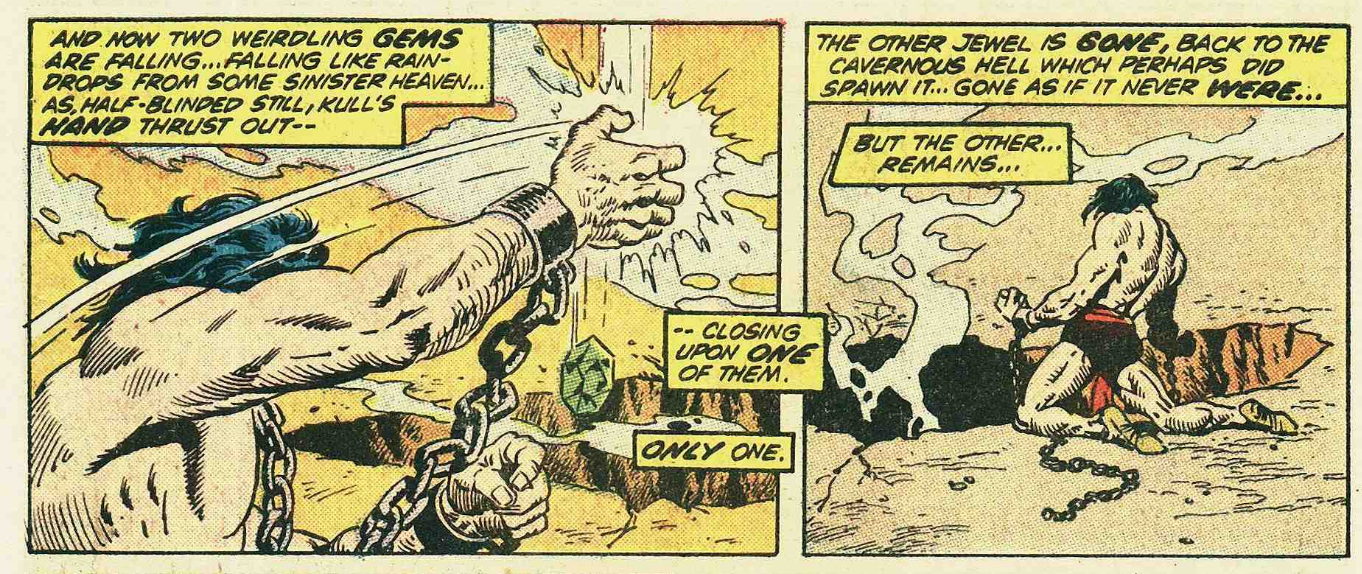

...THAT KULL SHALL DIE UN-CHAINED!


BUT THE QUASI-HUMAN, TIMELESS THING IN THE ARENA IS BEYOND HEARING...
...AS GEM WHICH HAD NEVER TOUCHED GEM... AS TWIN JEWELS WHICH WERE KEPT EVER APART, EYES IN A GREAT CARVEN SERPENT-IDOL...
...COME TOGETHER, LIKE TWO HURTLING PLANETS WHICH HAVE TRAVERSED A COSMOS TO COLLIDE...AND FUSE!


THULSA DOOM DOES NOT HEAR THAT STARTLED ROAR OF THE CROWD, AS HARD-HURLED CHAINS STRIKE WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN FLESH...


HE DOES NOT FEEL THE HEAVY, CLANKING LINKS WHICH SMITE HIM AGAIN AND AGAIN, AS INEFFECTUAL AS DISTANT SUMMER THUNDER...
NOR DOES HE NOTE THE TIGERISH SNARL TORN FROM THE THROAT OF A BARBARIAN GONE MAD.
FOR, HIS IS NOW THE POWER OF A WORLD...
...NAY...A UNIVERSE!
17


YET EVEN THE HEADY TASTE OF POWER UNEQUALED CAN TURN TO BITTER WORMWOOD IN A DEATHLESS THROAT...
POWER! TOO MUCH POWER--!
CANNOT-- SEPARATE-- THE SERPENT GEM--!
AND NOW THE TERROR SEIZES HIM--HIS MULTIPLYING, CASCADING MIND-WAVES LASH OUT LIKE GREAT, UN-CONTROLLED BURSTS OF HEAVEN-FIRE...
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN UNGUESSED EONS, THULSA DOOM KNOWS... PAIN!
...NIGHT TEARING ASUNDER THE VERY WORLD HE HAS MEANT TO RULE!
AYE, GREAT IS THE ARCANE WISDOM OF THULSA DOOM-- AND GREATER STILL THE KNOWLEDGE HE HAS SOUGHT... AND FOUND.
BUT, HE FORGOT THAT TO BE ALL POWER... ALL KNOWLEDGE... IS TO BECOME ALL...
...AND THAT, TO BE A PART OF EVERYTHING...
...IS ALSO TO BE...
...NOTHING.
18





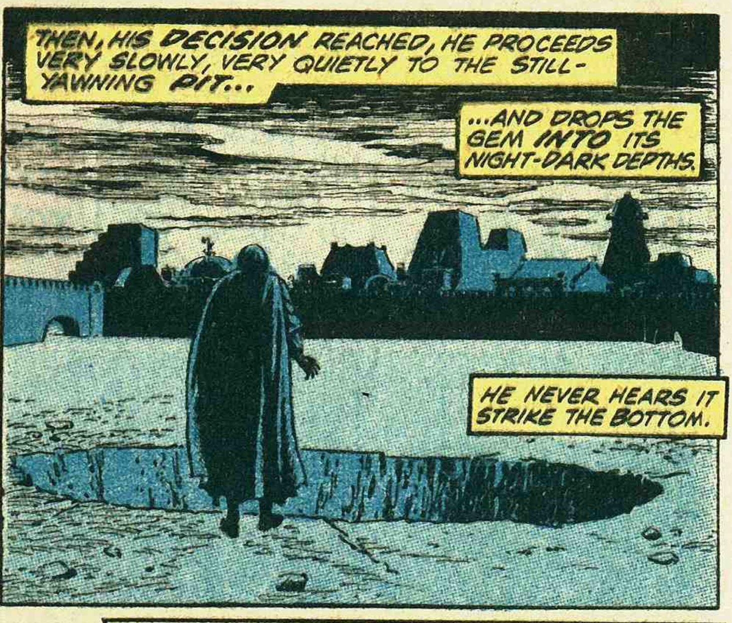
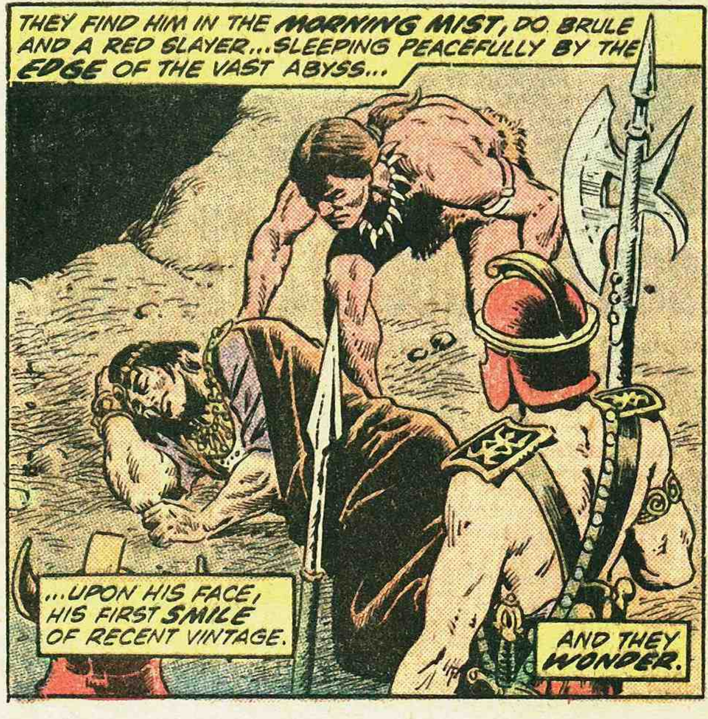






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THE BURDENSOME AFFAIRS OF STATE PASS LIKE RUNNING WATER THRU HIS MIND, LEAVING NO TRACK OR TRACE...
...TILL AT LENGTH, HIS EXASPERATED ADVISORS LEAVE HIM BE.
FOR, 'TIS DREAMS OF POWER WHICH FILL KULL'S MIND THIS EVENTIDE... THE POWER WHICH LURKS WITHIN EVEN ONE OF THE SERPENT GEMS..
ALL NIGHT HE ROAMS ALONG THE CLAMMY PALACE CORRIDORS, BESET BY VISIONS OF INVINCIBILITY... ILLUSIONS OF INVULNERABILITY...
...OF THINGS THAT MIGHT BE...

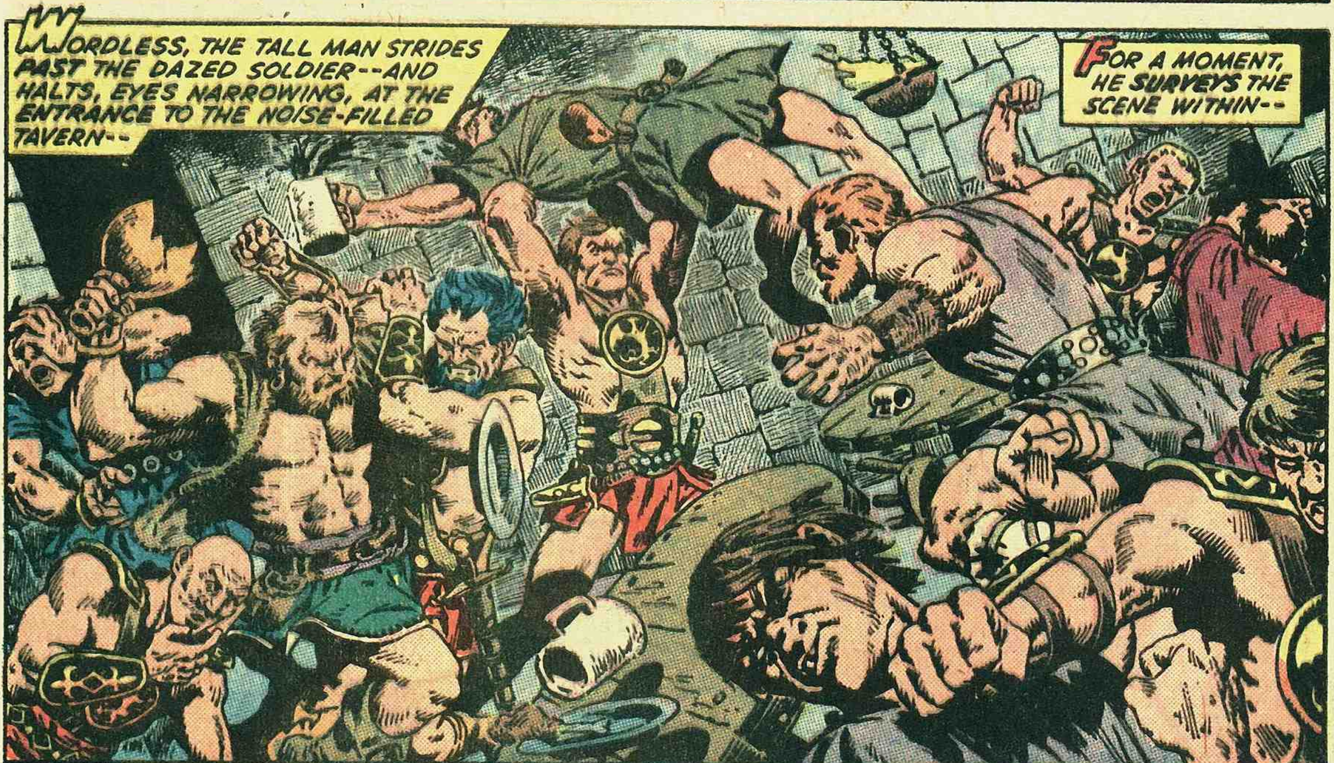
...AND THEN, AT LAST, THE MEMORY OF WHAT WAS: THE DAYS OF YORE WHEN HE WAS NOT A KING, BUT A HUNTED OUTLAW... A RECKLESS GLADIATOR...
...A MAN, IN SHORT... AMONG OTHER MEN.

THEN, HIS DECISION REACHED, HE PROCEEDS VERY SLOWLY, VERY QUIETLY TO THE STILL-YAWNING PIT...
...AND DROPS THE GEM INTO ITS NIGHT-DARK DEPTHS.
HE NEVER HEARS IT STRIKE THE BOTTOM.

THEY FIND HIM IN THE MORNING MIST, DO BRULE AND A RED SLAYER...SLEEPING PEACEFULLY BY THE EDGE OF THE VAST ABYSS...
...UPON HIS FACE, HIS FIRST SMILE OF RECENT VINTAGE.
AND THEY WONDER.

THEY WONDER, TOO, ABOUT THE STATUE HE ERECTS IN WEEKS TO COME, ABOVE THE PIT... AND THERE ARE THOSE WHO WILL SWEAR THAT IT SYMBOLIZES KULL'S VICTORY OVER THULSA DOOM... OR OVER THE CHAINS THAT BOUND HIM...
BUT WHEN KULL GAZES UPON IT, HE THINKS MERELY OF HIS FINAL TRIUMPH O'ER... THE EYE OF THE SERPENT.
FINIS



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PEASANT DOG! ATTACK ONE OF THE KING'S OWN GUARD, WILL HE? STRIKE A RED SLAYER, WILL HE?
I'LL SEE HIM BROKEN LIKE-- EH?
YOU! WHAT ARE YOU STARING AT, SWI-- UMH.
SIRE?


WORDLESS, THE TALL MAN STRIDES PAST THE DAZED SOLDIER--AND HALTS, EYES NARROWING, AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE NOISE-FILLED TAVERN--
FOR A MOMENT, HE SURVEYS THE SCENE WITHIN--


--AND THEN, IN A VOICE FAMILIAR TO THOSE PRESENT WHO ONCE SERVED WITH THIS BARBARIAN FROM ATLANTIS--HE ROARS!
SILENCE!
YOUR KING COMMANDS IT!


BY THE GODS-- KULL!
SIRE, WE--
SAY NO MORE, ALECTO. THE NIGHTS ARE HOT... AND TEMPERS GROW THIN.
WERE I NOT YOUR KING, I MIGHT HAVE JOINED YOU...
...BUT BECAUSE I AM YOUR KING...







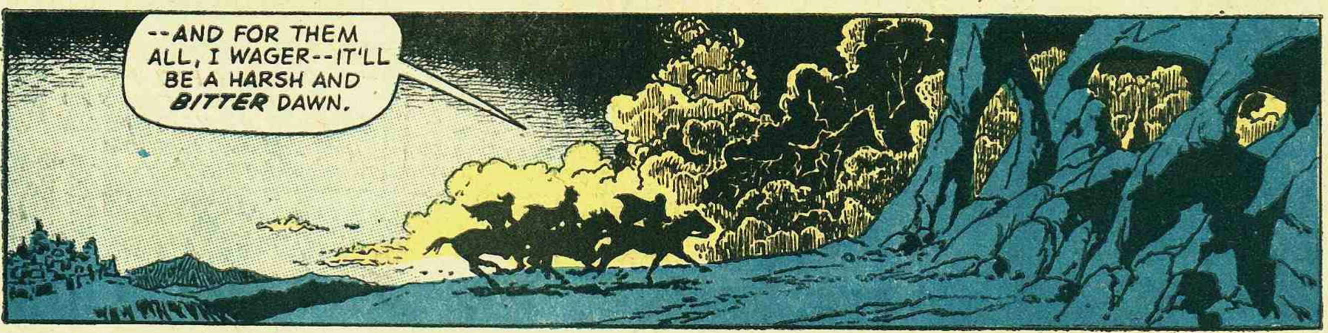


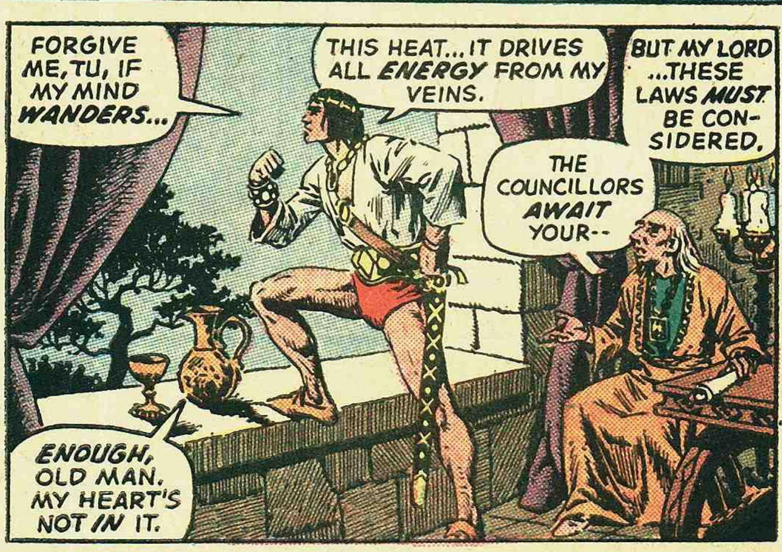


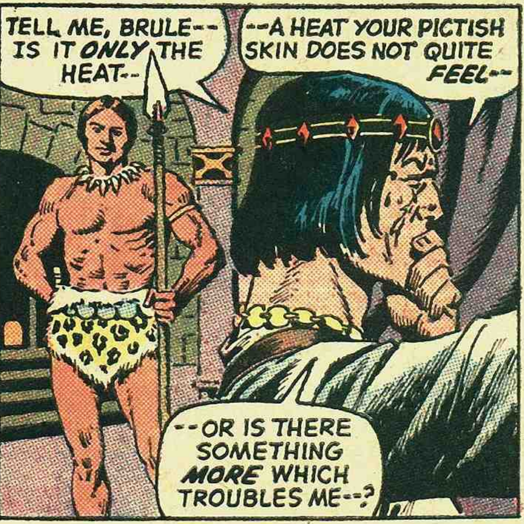
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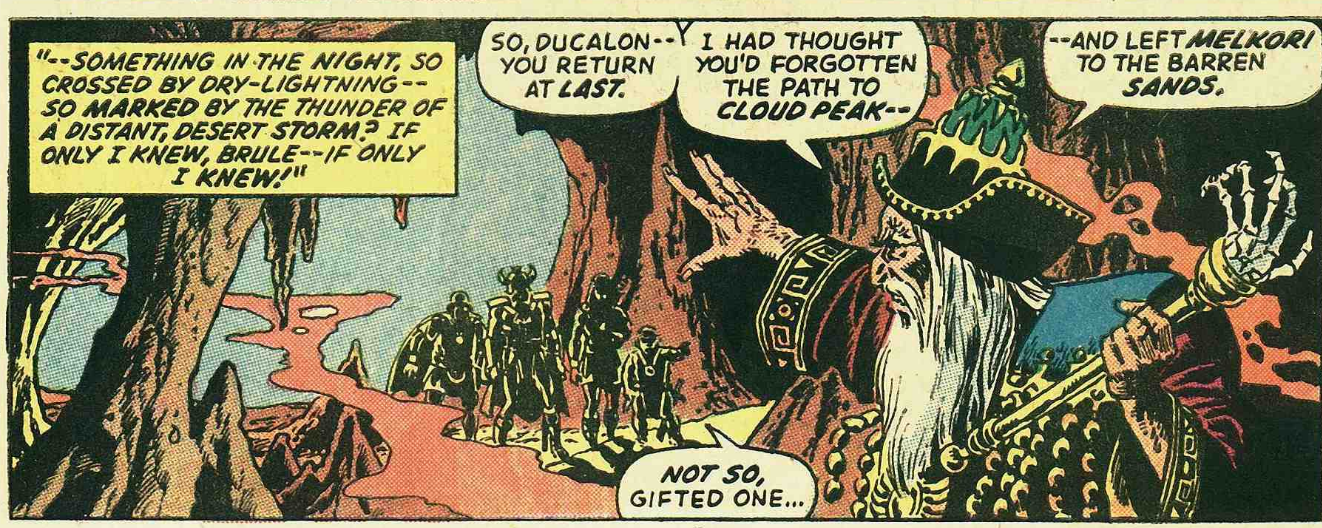

WHILE, IN A SHADOWED ALLEY, KULL'S WORDS TO THE MAD MINSTREL SEEM MORE THAN MERELY DERISIVE...


...RATHER, PROPHETIC.!
RIDONDO, YOU'RE A FOOL.
YOUR GAME COULD HAVE COST US EVERYTHING.
ENAROS IS QUITE CORRECT.
IF KULL EVEN SUSPECTS--
HE SLUMBERS LIKE ALL THE OTHERS, BARON KANUUB--

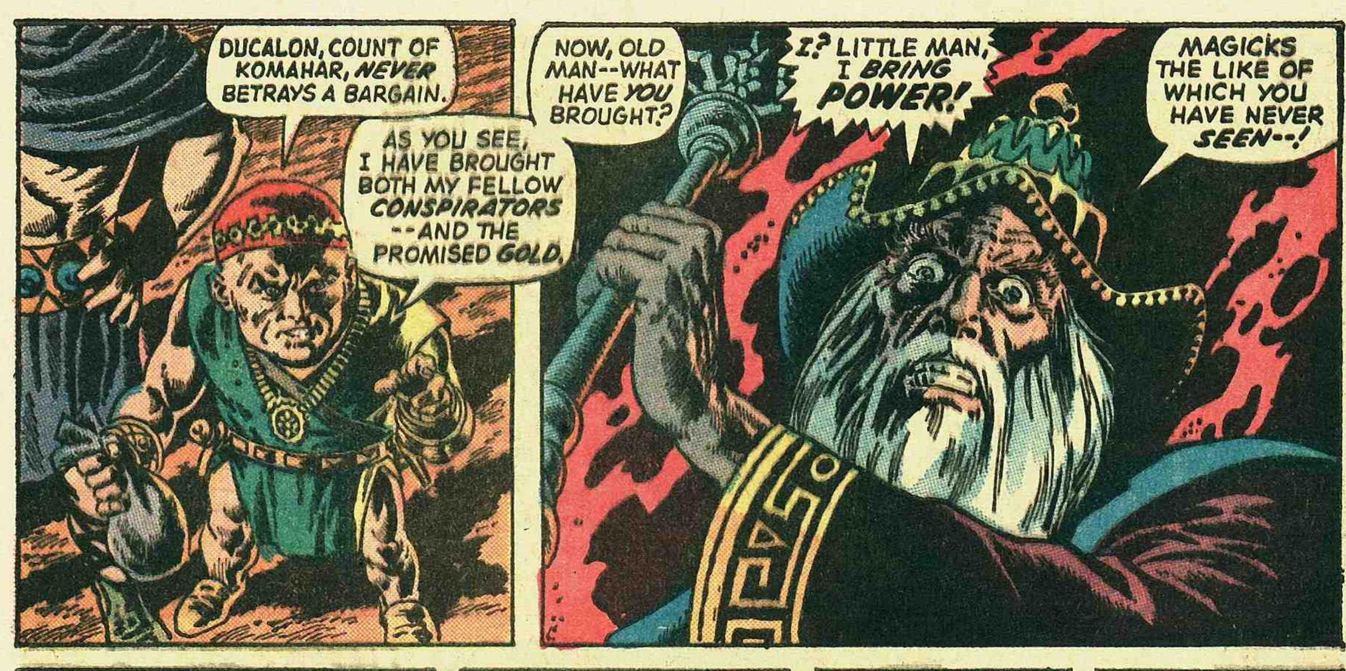

--AND FOR THEM ALL, I WAGER--IT'LL BE A HARSH AND BITTER DAWN.

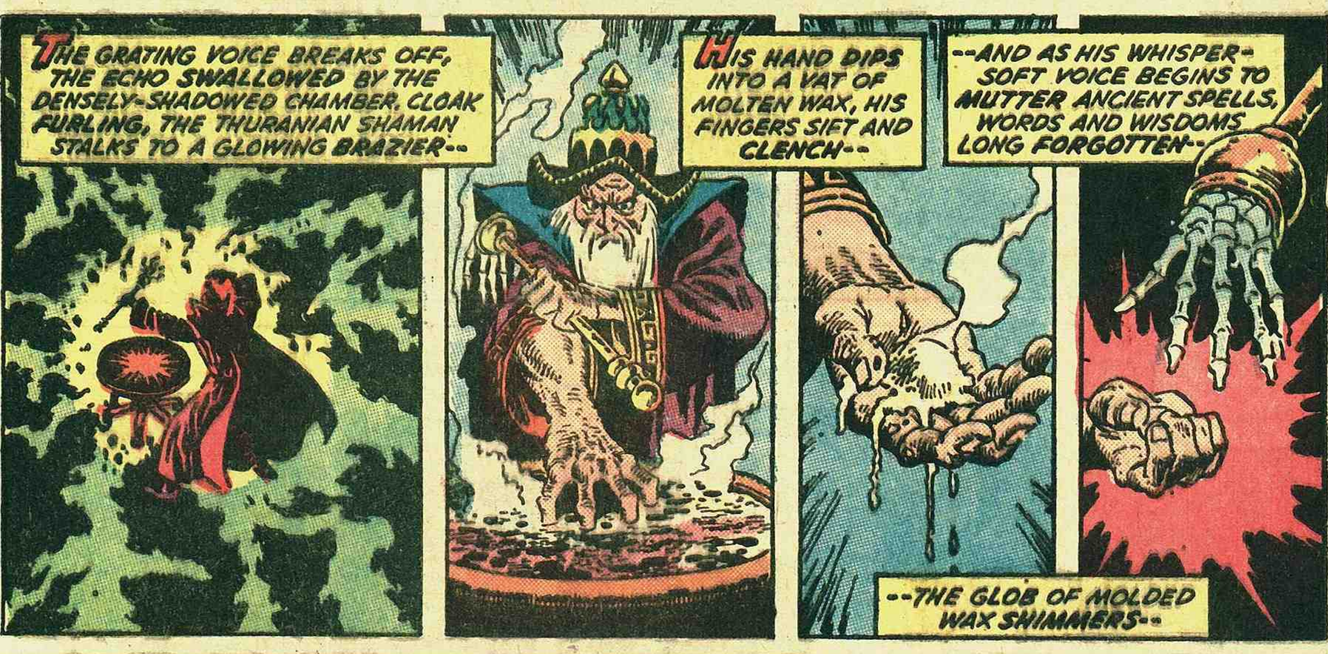

FORGIVE ME, TU, IF MY MIND WANDERS...
THIS HEAT...IT DRIVES ALL ENERGY FROM MY VEINS.
BUT MY LORD ...THESE LAWS MUST BE CONSIDERED.
THE COUNCILLORS AWAIT YOUR--
ENOUGH, OLD MAN. MY HEART'S NOT IN IT.


TELL ME, BRULE-- IS IT ONLY THE HEAT--
--A HEAT YOUR PICTISH SKIN DOES NOT QUITE FEEL--
--OR IS THERE SOMETHING MORE WHICH TROUBLES ME--?


"--SOMETHING IN THE NIGHT, SO CROSSED BY DRY-LIGHTNING-- SO MARKED BY THE THUNDER OF A DISTANT, DESERT STORM? IF ONLY I KNEW, BRULE--IF ONLY I KNEW!"
SO, DUCALON-- YOU RETURN AT LAST.
I HAD THOUGHT YOU'D FORGOTTEN THE PATH TO CLOUD PEAK--
--AND LEFT MELKORI TO THE BARREN SANDS.
NOT SO, GIFTED ONE...

5


DUCALON, COUNT OF KOMAHAR, NEVER BETRAYS A BARGAIN.
AS YOU SEE, I HAVE BROUGHT BOTH MY FELLOW CONSPIRATORS --AND THE PROMISED GOLD.
NOW, OLD MAN--WHAT HAVE YOU BROUGHT?
I? LITTLE MAN, I BRING POWER!
MAGICKS THE LIKE OF WHICH YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN--!


THE GRATING VOICE BREAKS OFF, THE ECHO SWALLOWED BY THE DENSELY-SHADOWED CHAMBER. CLOAK FURLING, THE THURANIAN SHAMAN STALKS TO A GLOWING BRAZIER--
HIS HAND DIPS INTO A VAT OF MOLTEN WAX, HIS FINGERS SIFT AND CLENCH--
--AND AS HIS WHISPER-SOFT VOICE BEGINS TO MUTTER ANCIENT SPELLS, WORDS AND WISDOMS LONG FORGOTTEN--
--THE GLOB OF MOLDED WAX SHIMMERS--

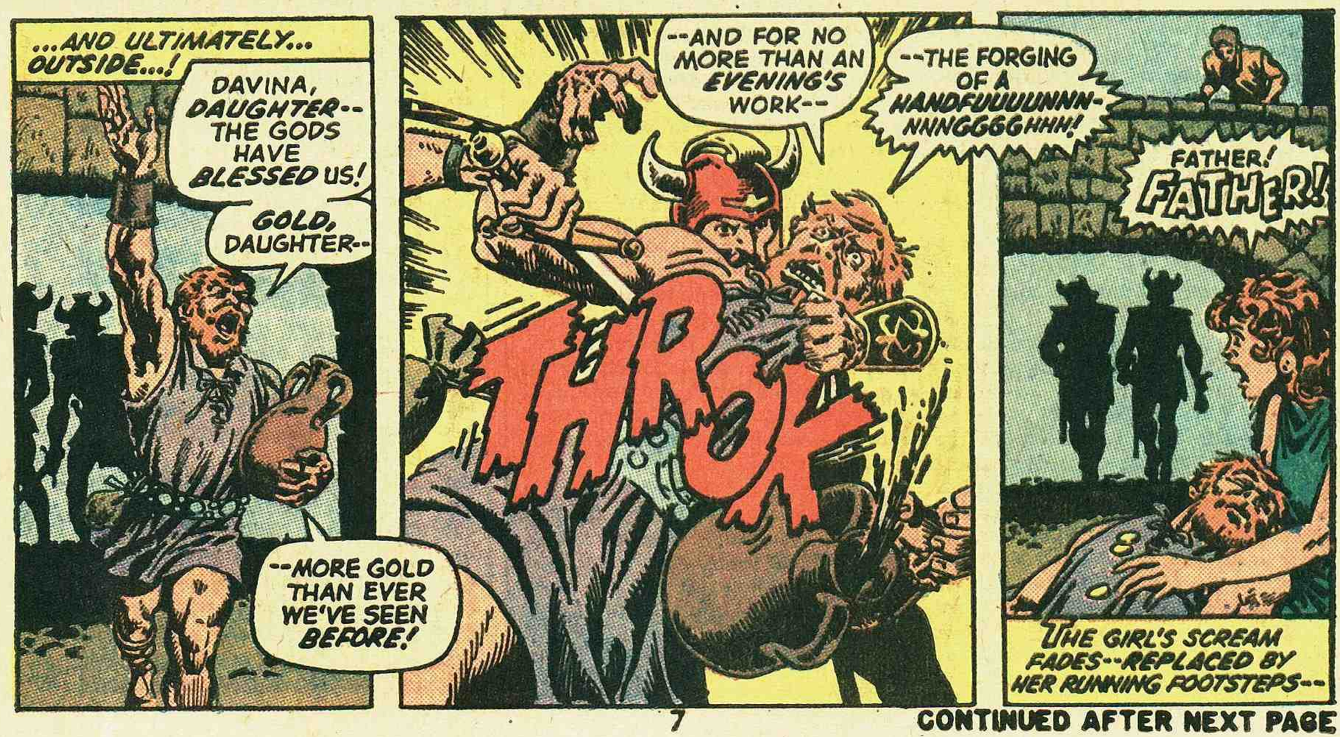

--AND SLOWLY--TRANSFORMS!
MELKORI, YOU SURPASS MY BOLDEST EXPECTATIONS...
...IT'S QUITE DELIGHTFUL... A HUMAN EYE.
5.





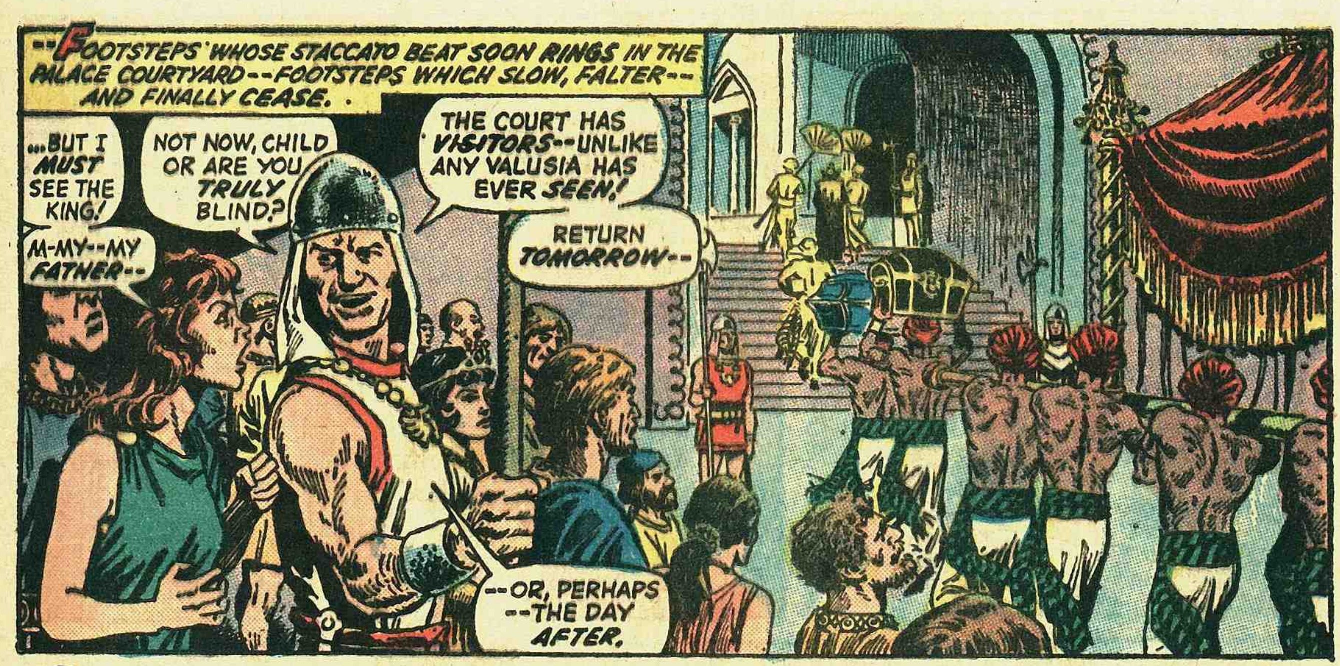






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--FOOTSTEPS WHOSE STACCATO BEAT SOON RINGS IN THE PALACE COURTYARD--FOOTSTEPS WHICH SLOW, FALTER--AND FINALLY CEASE.
...BUT I MUST SEE THE KING!
NOT NOW, CHILD OR ARE YOU TRULY BLIND?
THE COURT HAS VISITORS--UNLIKE ANY VALUSIA HAS EVER SEEN!
M-MY--MY FATHER--
RETURN TOMORROW--
--OR, PERHAPS--THE DAY AFTER.


STUNNED WITH GRIEF, BROKEN BY DESPAIR, THE BLACKSMITH'S DAUGHTER TURNS AWAY...WHILE, IN A HUMID ANTECHAMBER, BRIEF MOMENTS LATER...
BY YOUR LEAVE, SIRE--
THE BARON LANN OF THE NORTHMARCHES BEGS AUDIENCE WITH KULL.
AWAY WITH HIM, GUARD--WE'VE NO TIME FOR--
QUIET, TU.
THIS WORK WEARIES ME... WE NEED A DIVERSION, I THINK.


AH, MILORD...YOUR WORDS GIVE PROOF TO YOUR WELL-KNOWN WISDOM.
I'VE TRAVELED MANY MILES--VISITED MANY AND GLORIOUS HOUSEHOLDS--
--YET NONE APPROACH THE COURT OF KULL--FOR GLORY, AND, GOOD SIRE, FOR KINDNESS.
I AM CALLED LANN, BARON OF THE NORTH-MARCHES--AND WITH ME IS MY DAUGHTER--


--JIRANE!
MUCH HAVE WE HEARD OF THE KING CALLED KULL.
MY LORD... WE ARE HONORED.

11



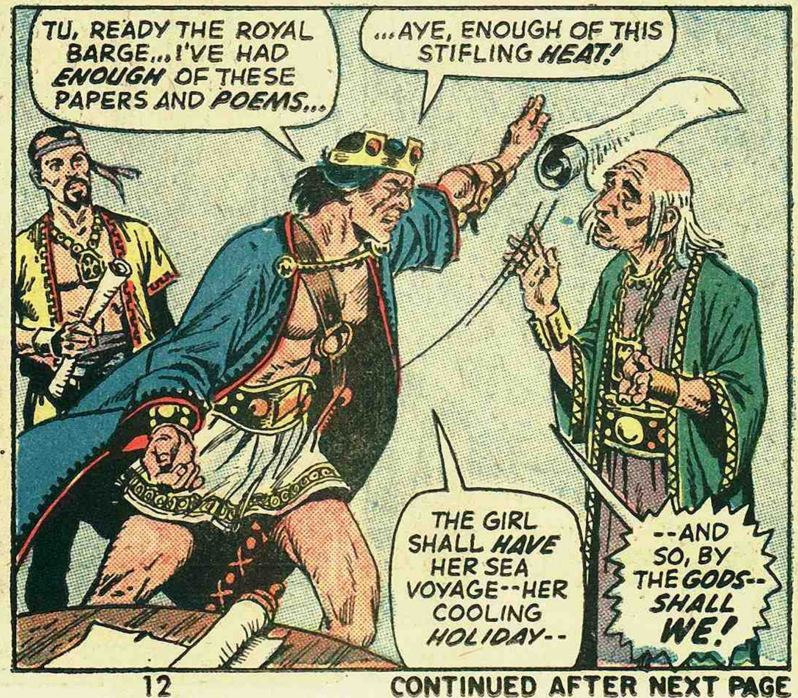




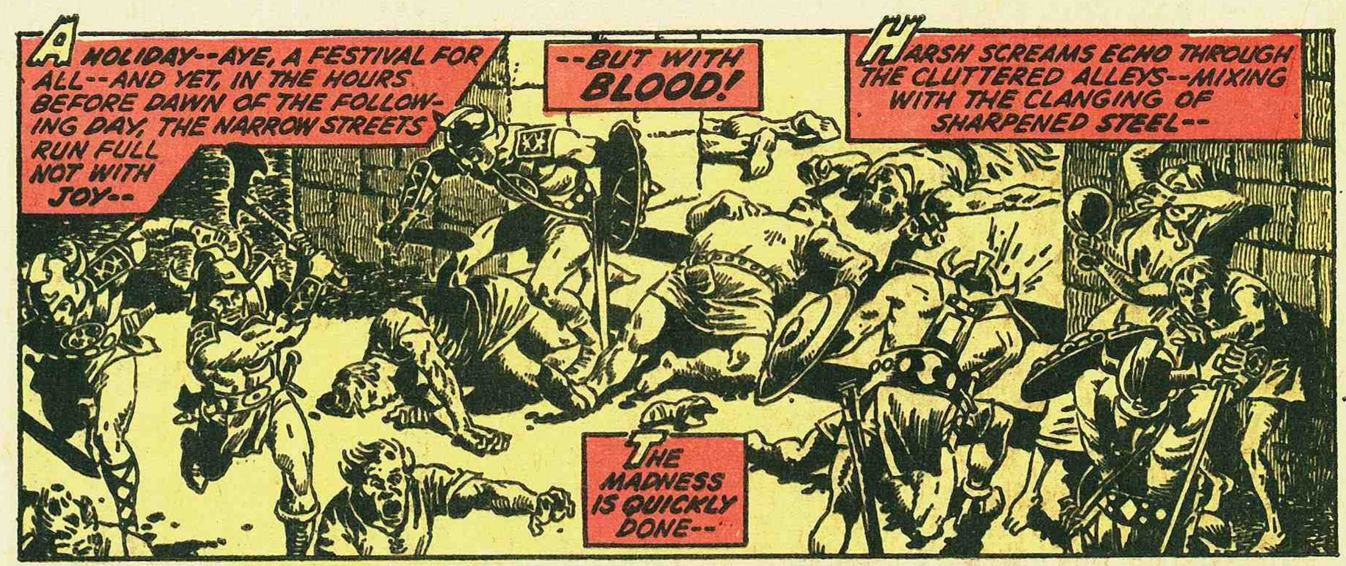








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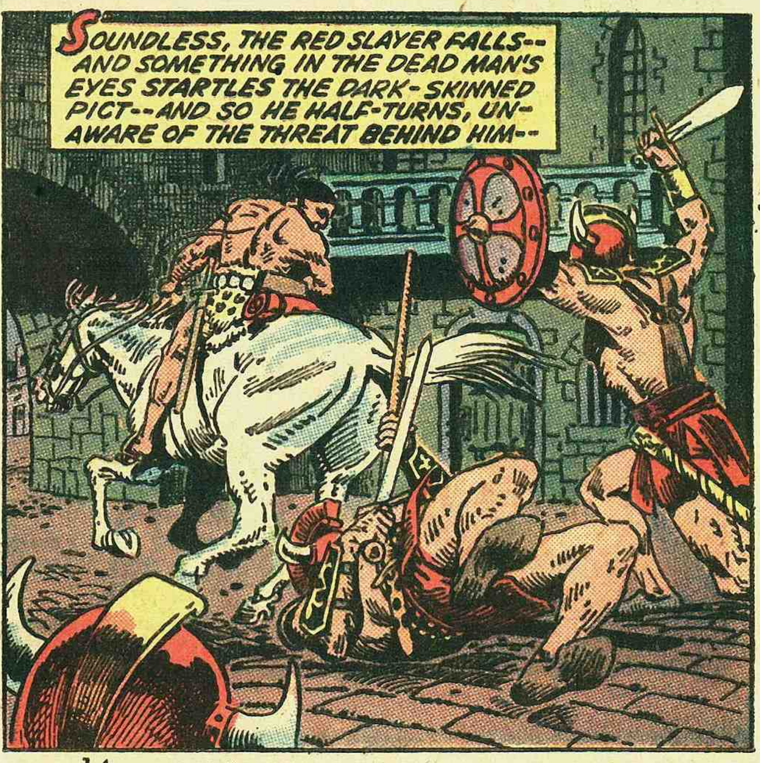

A HOLIDAY--AYE, A FESTIVAL FOR ALL--AND YET, IN THE HOURS BEFORE DAWN OF THE FOLLOWING DAY, THE NARROW STREETS RUN FULL NOT WITH JOY--
--BUT WITH BLOOD!
HARSH SCREAMS ECHO THROUGH THE CLUTTERED ALLEYS--MIXING WITH THE CLANGING OF SHARPENED STEEL--
THE MADNESS IS QUICKLY DONE--


--AND VANISHED WITH THE DAWN--SAVE FOR THE SPECTRE-SHADOW OF SMOKE--AND BLOOD.
HO, ALECTO--

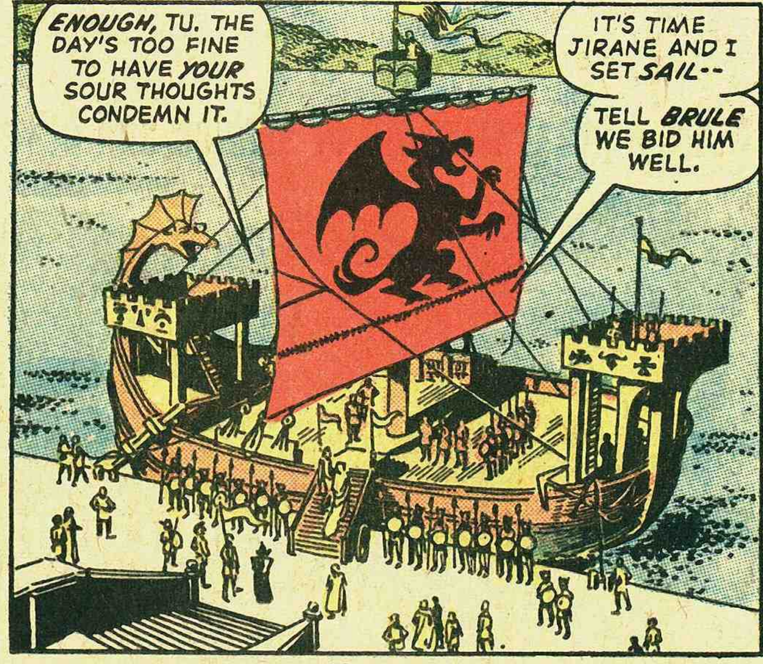

WHAT BRINGS YOU OUT SO EARLY, FRIEND--?
--THE KING'S PARTY LEAVES NOT FOR ANOTHER HOUR YET--!
WAIT--THAT SMEAR ACROSS YOUR FACE--AND THOSE OTHERS--


--THEIR FACES ARE UNFAMILIAR --THEIR EYES--
ALECTO...?


THE PICT MOVES SWIFTLY--HIS EYES CATCH THE GLINT OF SUNLIGHT ON DRAWN SWORD, THE ABRUPT MOVEMENT OF THE SOLDIERS NEAR HIM--
--AND HE ACTS--!
NOT FOR NAUGHT HAS HE BEEN NAMED BRULE--THE SPEAR-SLAYER!


SOUNDLESS, THE RED SLAYER FALLS--AND SOMETHING IN THE DEAD MAN'S EYES STARTLES THE DARK-SKINNED PICT--AND SO HE HALF-TURNS, UNAWARE OF THE THREAT BEHIND HIM--















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UPON THE ROYAL BARGE, HOWEVER, THE DAY MOVES GENTLY BY--A DAY SOFTENED BY THE LIGHT SEA BREEZE--

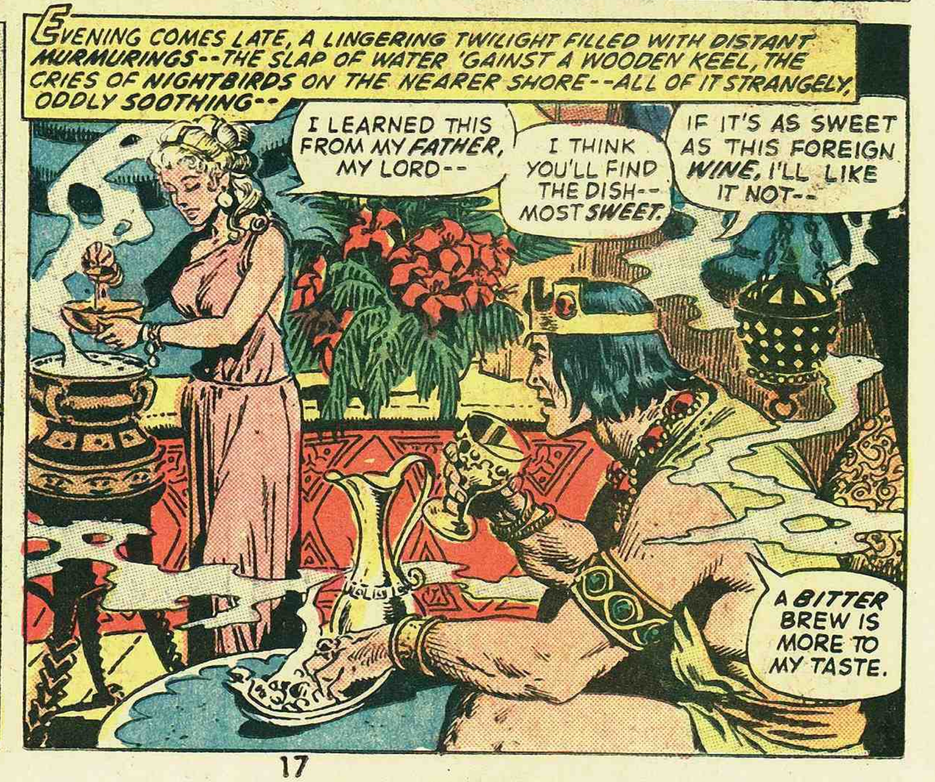

--A DAY BRIGHTENED BY THE TRILL OF FLUTING PIPES--AND THE WHISPER OF FLOATING SILK--
QUITE A WOMAN, MILORD! I'VE TRAVELED AS FAR AS DARK LEMURIA--
--AND NEVER HAVE I SEEN A LASS AS LITHE AS SHE!
AYE, GOOD CAPTAIN--IT'S ALMOST UNNATURAL--
AND YET--


WAIT--THE LADY FALLS--


FORGIVE ME, MY LORD--THE ROCKING DECK--!
IT'S KULL WHO SHOULD ASK FOR PARDON, JIRANE--
THE DECK SEEMS TO BE STAINED--BY WAX!


THEN PERHAPS--IT WAS THAT I SLIPPED ON.
GREATLY, JIRANE!
BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER. ALL THAT MATTERS IS--DID MY DANCE PLEASE YOU, KULL?
THEN I AM SATISFIED.


WITH A LAUGH, SHE GOES BELOW--AND FOR LONG, THOUGHTFUL MOMENTS, THE KING CALLED KULL STANDS STARING AT THE PASSING RIVERBANKS--AND WHAT HE SEES THERE, NONE MAY KNOW.

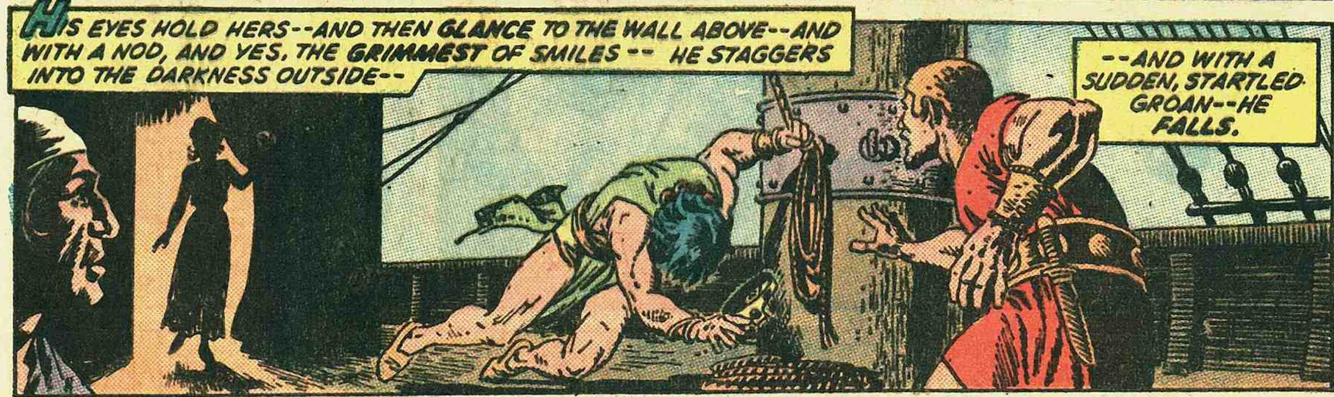

EVENING COMES LATE, A LINGERING TWILIGHT FILLED WITH DISTANT MURMURINGS--THE SLAP OF WATER 'GAINST A WOODEN KEEL, THE CRIES OF NIGHTBIRDS ON THE NEARER SHORE--ALL OF IT STRANGELY, ODDLY SOOTHING--
I LEARNED THIS FROM MY FATHER, MY LORD--
I THINK YOU'LL FIND THE DISH--MOST SWEET.
IF IT'S AS SWEET AS THIS FOREIGN WINE, I'LL LIKE IT NOT--
A BITTER BREW IS MORE TO MY TASTE.


STILL, I THINK YOU'LL FAVOR THIS--MILORD, IS SOMETHING WRONG?
NOTHING...IT'S JUST THE HEAT...
VALKA--THIS ROOM IS LIKE--A FURNACE!


PERHAPS THE BRIDGE, KULL?
IF I SERVED YOU THERE--?
NO--THIS WILL PASS--

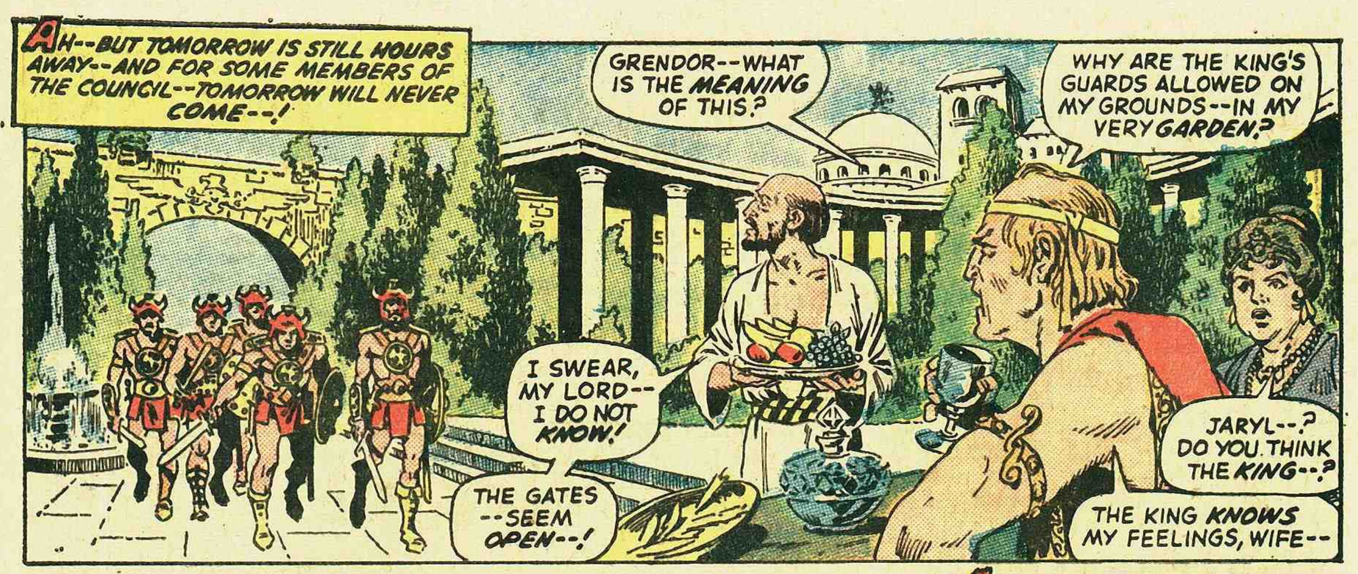

--AND I'VE SOMETHING TO GIVE YOU--THAT I'LL GIVE YOU HERE--
--OR NOT AT ALL!
MILORD--YOUR RING?


AYE, GIRL--A KING'S RING. A HANDSOME TREASURE, EH?
YOU'VE MADE THE HOURS PASS QUICKLY--AND THAT DESERVES A PRIZE, OF SORTS--
--IF I COULD BUT STAND--AND GIVE IT--THAT CURSED WINE HAS FOGGED MY BRAIN, I THINK--
THEN REST, GOOD KING--AND TOMORROW, JIRANE WILL DANCE AGAIN.


HIS EYES HOLD HERS--AND THEN GLANCE TO THE WALL ABOVE--AND WITH A NOD, AND YES, THE GRIMMEST OF SMILES -- HE STAGGERS INTO THE DARKNESS OUTSIDE--
--AND WITH A SUDDEN, STARTLED GROAN--HE FALLS.


AND IN THE CITY OF WONDERS, LEAGUES DISTANT--THERE ARE NO COOL WINDS TO CALM BLACK ANGER'S HEAT--
IS IT TRUE, DYRAN, WHAT THEY SAY--
--THAT THE CHIEF COUNCILLOR HAS HAD THE KING'S GUARD ARRESTED?
AYE.
WHAT ELSE DARE HE DO? THE PEOPLE SEETHE--
--AND TRULY--WHO CAN BLAME THEM?


ARRESTED? LOCKED AWAY?
GIVE THE RED SLAYERS TO US --WE'LL TEACH THEM TO KILL A YOUNG GIRL'S FATHER!
THE CITIZENS ARE DANGEROUS, MILORD--THEY DEMAND SATISFACTION FOR THESE--
--THESE MINDLESS ATROCITIES!
WE CAN'T AWAIT THE KING'S RETURN...
TOMORROW, THEN--WE'LL HAVE THE TRIAL.











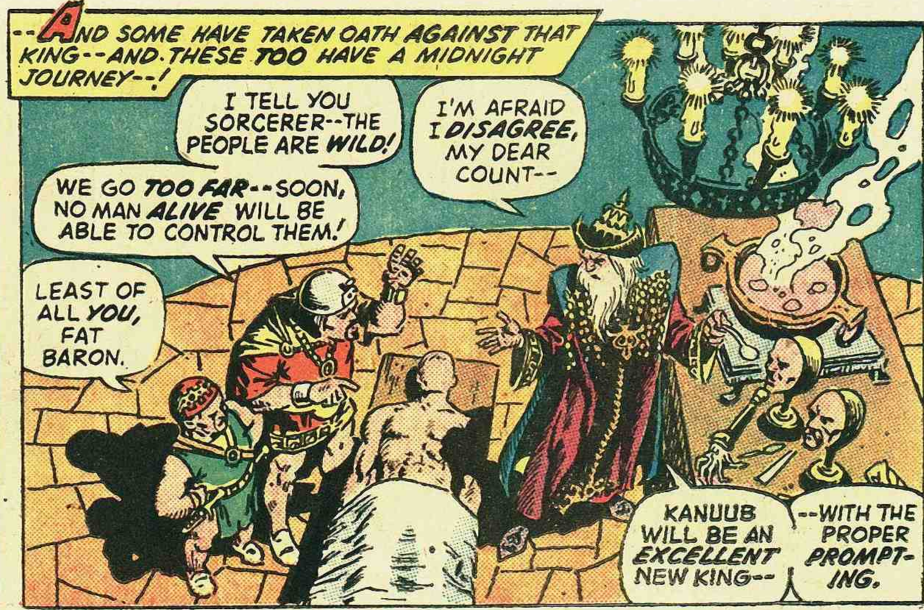






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OTHERS, TOO, HAVE SWORN--SOME HAVE GIVEN THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO A FRIEND AND KING--AND OF THESE, ONE RIDES TO WARN THAT KING--

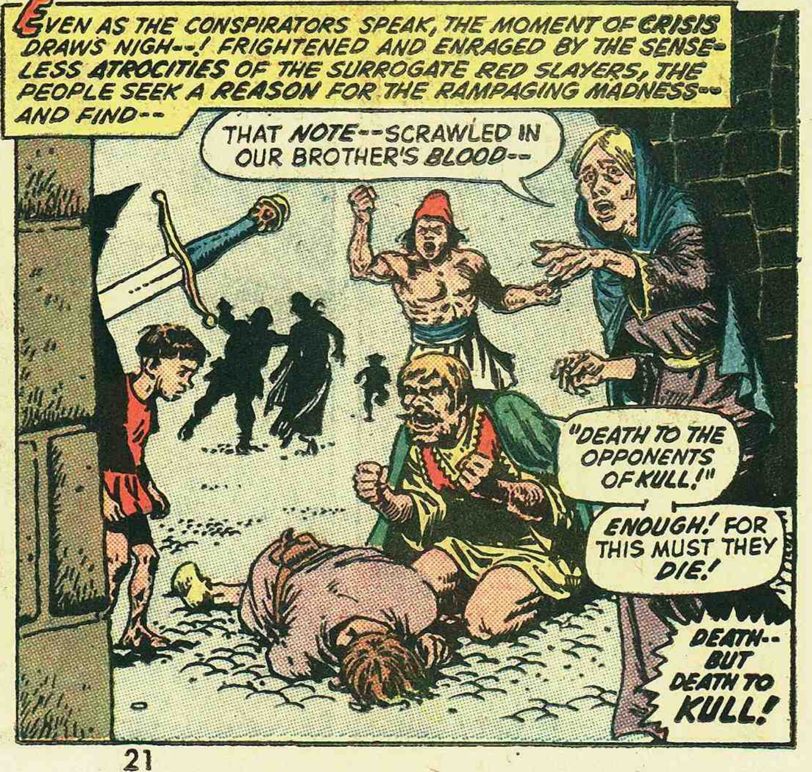

--AND SOME HAVE TAKEN OATH AGAINST THAT KING--AND THESE TOO HAVE A MIDNIGHT JOURNEY--!
I TELL YOU SORCERER--THE PEOPLE ARE WILD!
WE GO TOO FAR--SOON, NO MAN ALIVE WILL BE ABLE TO CONTROL THEM!
I'M AFRAID I DISAGREE, MY DEAR COUNT--
LEAST OF ALL YOU, FAT BARON.
KANUUB WILL BE AN EXCELLENT NEW KING--
--WITH THE PROPER PROMPTING.


CAREFUL, MAGICIAN--YOU OVERREACH YOURSELF.
I THINK IT'S TIME YOUR SERVICES WERE TERMINATED--
--YOUR USEFULNESS IS AT AN END!


NOT SO, LITTLE MAN--
THE END IS YOURS.


OR MUST I REMIND YOU THAT THERE ARE MORE WAXEN SOLDIERS THAN THOSE I GAVE YOU.


--AND THEY ALL ANSWER TO ME--
--TO MELIKORI--AND MELIKORI ALONE!


EVEN AS THE CONSPIRATORS SPEAK, THE MOMENT OF CRISIS DRAWS NIGH--! FRIGHTENED AND ENRAGED BY THE SENSELESS ATROCITIES OF THE SURROGATE RED SLAYERS, THE PEOPLE SEEK A REASON FOR THE RAMPAGING MADNESS--AND FIND--
THAT NOTE--SCRAWLED IN OUR BROTHER'S BLOOD--
"DEATH TO THE OPPONENTS OF KULL!"
ENOUGH! FOR THIS MUST THEY DIE!
DEATH--BUT DEATH TO KULL!







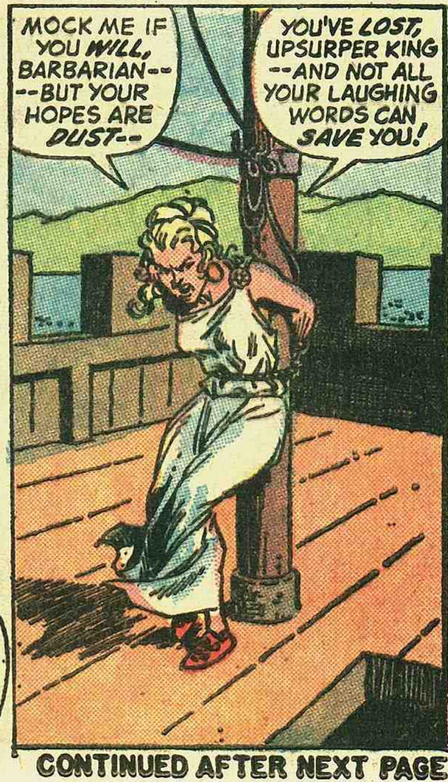




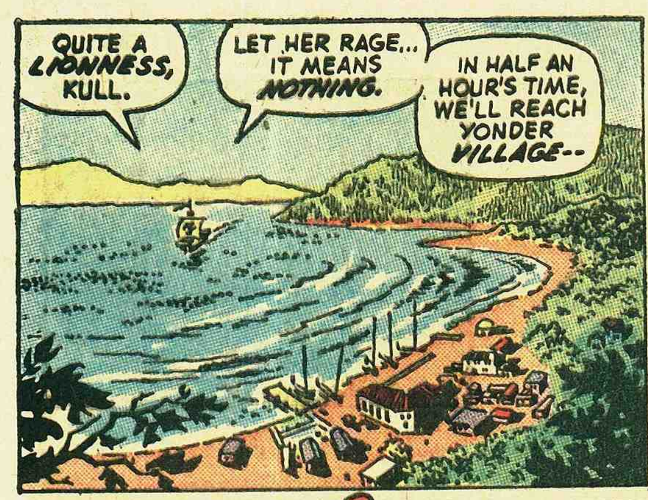




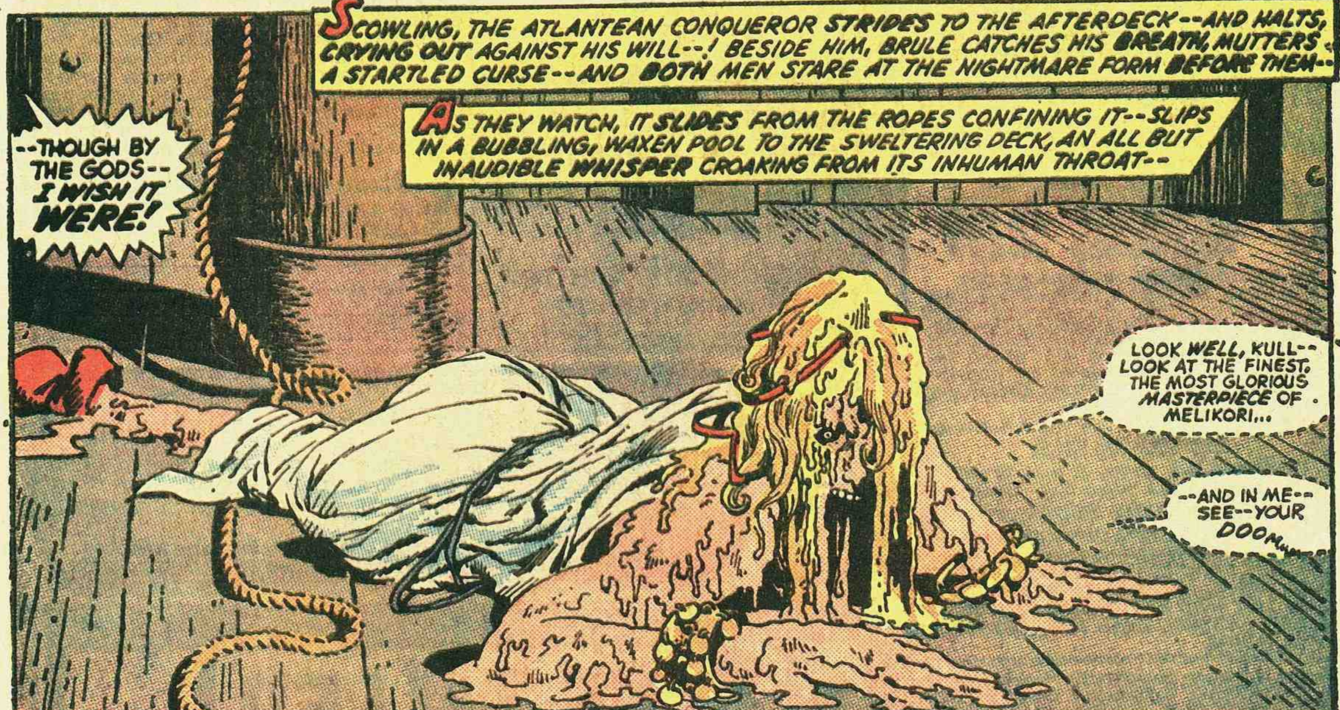


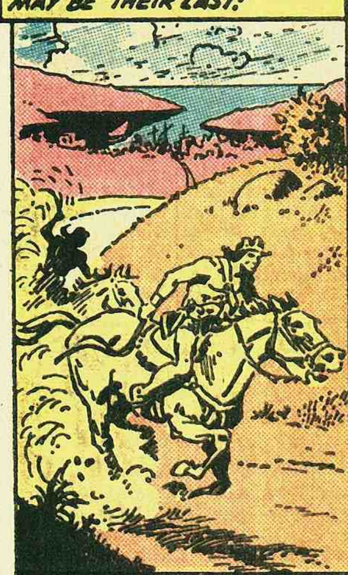


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QUITE A LIONNESS, KULL.
LET HER RAGE... IT MEANS NOTHING.
IN HALF AN HOUR'S TIME, WE'LL REACH YONDER VILLAGE--


--THERE TO FIND HORSES--AND RACE THE SETTING SUN!
LORD KULL--COME QUICKLY. THE GIRL JIRANE--
JIRANE? WHAT TRICK DOES SHE PLAY NOW?
NO TRICK, SIRE--


SCOWLING, THE ATLANTEAN CONQUEROR STRIDES TO THE AFTERDECK--AND HALTS, CRYING OUT AGAINST HIS WILL--! BESIDE HIM, BRULE CATCHES HIS BREATH, MUTTERS A STARTLED CURSE--AND BOTH MEN STARE AT THE NIGHTMARE FORM BEFORE THEM--
--THOUGH BY THE GODS--I WISH IT WERE!
AS THEY WATCH, IT SLIDES FROM THE ROPES CONFINING IT--SLIPS IN A BUBBLING, WAXEN POOL TO THE SWELTERING DECK, AN ALL BUT INAUDIBLE WHISPER CROAKING FROM ITS INHUMAN THROAT--
LOOK WELL, KULL--LOOK AT THE FINEST, THE MOST GLORIOUS MASTERPIECE OF MELIKORI...
--AND IN ME--SEE--YOUR DOOM...


THEN THE MONSTROSITY IS SILENT-- ITS LIQUID LIPS FOREVER SEALED; AND WHEN, LONG MINUTES LATER, TWO MEN RIDE FROM A HEAT-LAZED FISHING TOWN, THEY KNOW THAT THIS BATTLE--MAY BE THEIR LAST!


FOAM-FLECKED, THEIR FLANKS HEAVING WITH EXERTION, THE TWIN STALLIONS RIDE FOR NIGH ON FIVE HOURS--AND THE SUN HAS ALMOST SET WHEN THEY PASS DESERTED GATES--
--AYE, SIRE--THE CITIZENS MARCH ON THE PALACE TONIGHT--
AND SIRE, THEY SEEK THE RED SLAYERS' BLOOD!
MY THANKS, OLD ONE.
COME, BRULE--WE'VE ARRIVED NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON!


TORCHLIGHT FILLS THE PALACE GARDEN WITH EERIE GLOWS AND TWISTING SHADOWS--
--AND AMONG THOSE SHADOWS--

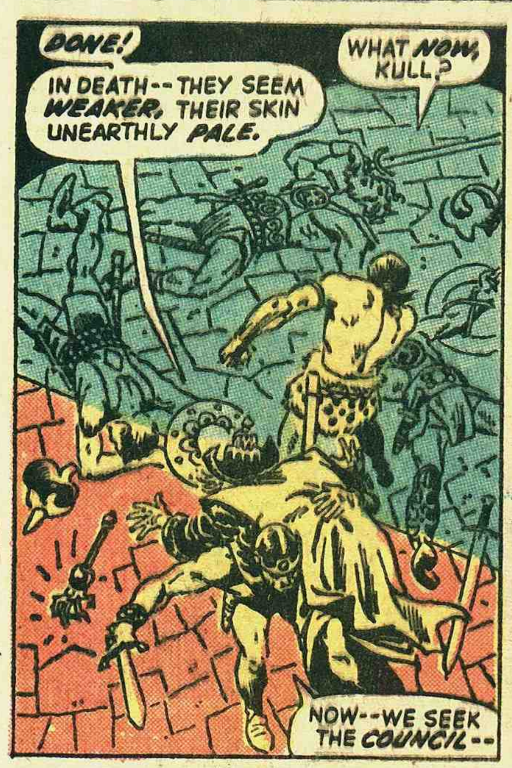

TRAITOROUS DOG! TURN AND FACE YOUR DEATH, 'BARON'--
--A DEATH AT THE HAND OF KULL!
YOU! I'M AFRAID YOU ARRIVE TOO LATE, FOOL--


--NOW--YOU HAVE ONLY YOUR DESTINY!
KULL--MORE OF THOSE SILENT IMPOSTORS--
THEN STAND ASIDE, BRULE--


--FOR NOW THIS FIGHT IS MINE!


THE CONSTRUCTS ARE SILENT--THEY TAKE THEIR DEATH WELL--

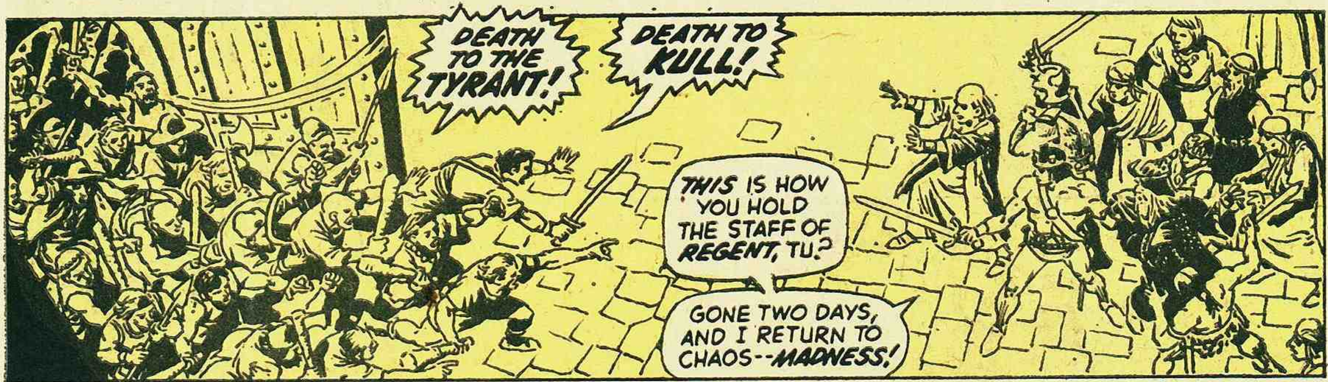

I WONDER, MAGICIAN--
--WILL YOU ACT THE SAME?


DONE!
IN DEATH--THEY SEEM WEAKER, THEIR SKIN UNEARTHLY PALE.
WHAT NOW, KULL?
NOW--WE SEEK THE COUNCIL--


--TO LET THE TRUTH BE KNOWN!
HEED ME--AND LEARN WHAT TREACHERY YOUR BLINDNESS SERVED!


MELIKORI--LANN--WHATEVER NAME YOU ANSWER TO--
--TELL THEM WHAT YOU'VE DONE--
--AND SPEAK TRUE--OR FEEL MY BLADE BETWEEN YOUR THRICE-CURSED RIBS.
THE KING IS MAD!
GODS HELP HER--HE KILLED MY DAUGHTER!



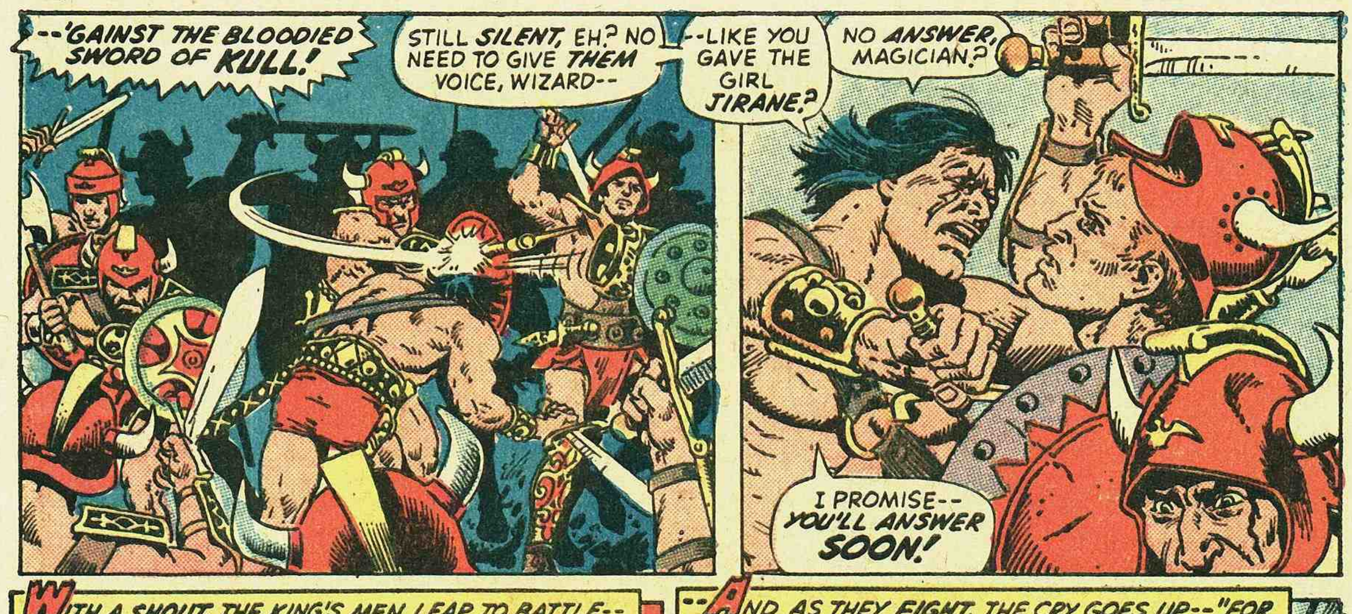








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--'GAINST THE BLOODIED SWORD OF KULL!
STILL SILENT, EH? NO NEED TO GIVE THEM VOICE, WIZARD--
--LIKE YOU GAVE THE GIRL JIRANE?
NO ANSWER, MAGICIAN?
I PROMISE-- YOU'LL ANSWER SOON!

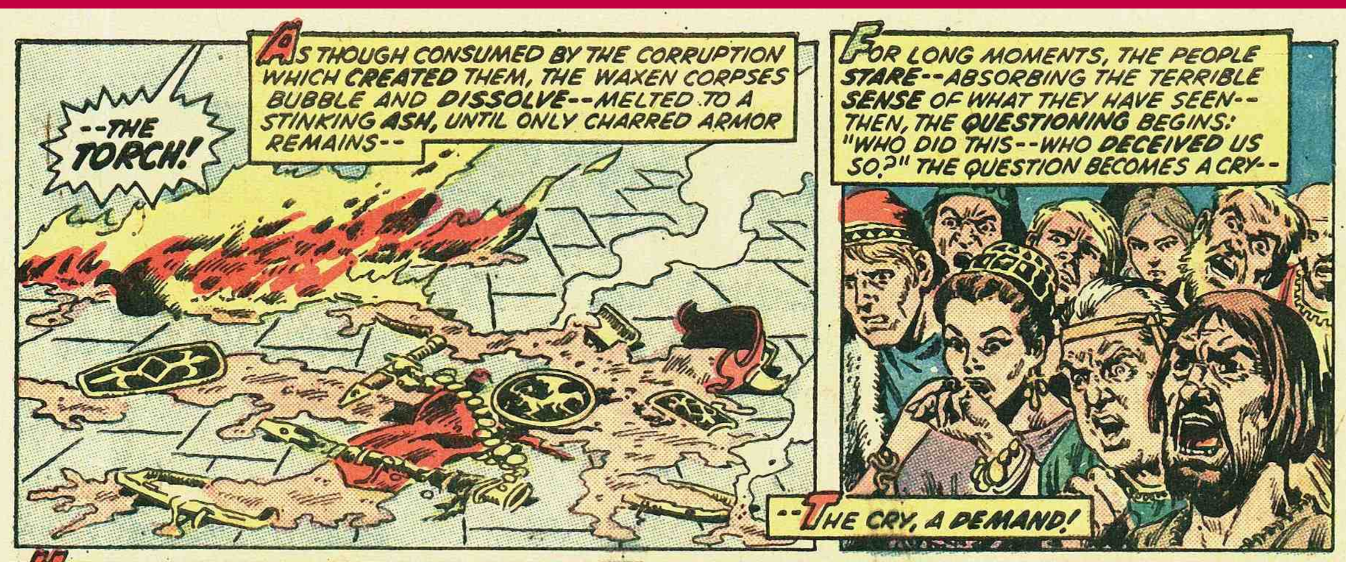

WITH A SHOUT, THE KING'S MEN LEAP TO BATTLE-- THEIR EYES GLITTER IN THE MUSKY TORCHLIGHT, THEIR SWORDS SPARKLE WITH EACH RISE AND FALL--




--AND AS THEY FIGHT, THE CRY GOES UP--"FOR KULL--FOR KULL--KULL, THE KING!" AND THEIR VOICES ECHO--ECHO AND REBOUND, AND WHEN THE CLANGOR OF STEEL AGAINST STEEL PASSES--
--THE VICTORY CRY REMAINS!


BREATH COMES IN SHORT GASPS--FOR SOME, IT COMES NOT AT ALL; NAY, NOR EVER AGAIN. FINALLY, THE KING TURNS--AND PEERS FROM UNDER A SWEATING BROW AT THE STUNNED MOB BELOW; WEARILY, HE SMILES--AND HOISTS ONE OF THE FALLEN MUTES INTO THE HOT, MUSKY AIR--
LOOK, TU--THOSE OF YOU WHO WOULD DOUBT YOUR KING--
...BLOODLESS AS A STONE!

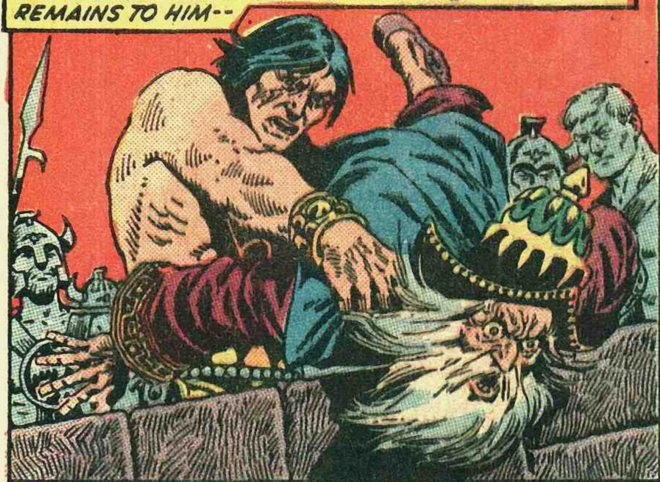

--AND IF YOU STILL HARBOR MISGIVINGS--OR INNOCENT CONFUSION--
--STUDY THIS--FIRST, OIL--AND THEN--



--THE TORCH!
AS THOUGH CONSUMED BY THE CORRUPTION WHICH CREATED THEM, THE WAXEN CORPSES BUBBLE AND DISSOLVE--MELTED TO A STINKING ASH, UNTIL ONLY CHARRED ARMOR REMAINS--
FOR LONG MOMENTS, THE PEOPLE STARE--ABSORBING THE TERRIBLE SENSE OF WHAT THEY HAVE SEEN--THEN, THE QUESTIONING BEGINS: "WHO DID THIS--WHO DECEIVED US SO?" THE QUESTION BECOMES A CRY--
--THE CRY, A DEMAND!

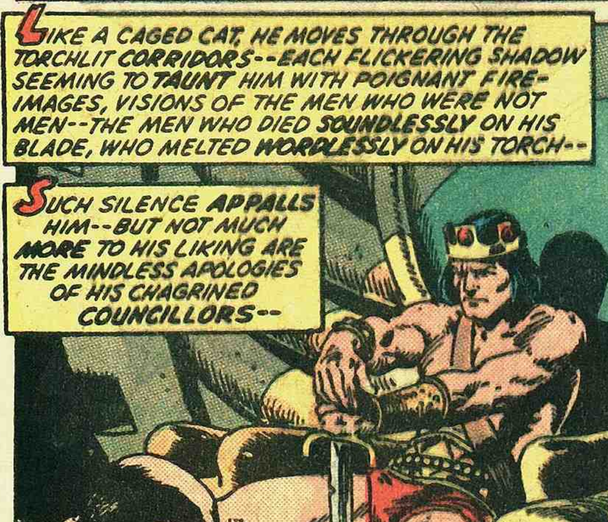


HIS EYES NARROWING, KULL REGARDS THE SNARLING CROWD WITH COLD DISGUST--HOW QUICKLY THEY TURN, THESE DECADENT VALUSIANS! THE DISGUST BUILDS, UNTIL ONLY ONE REACTION REMAINS TO HIM--





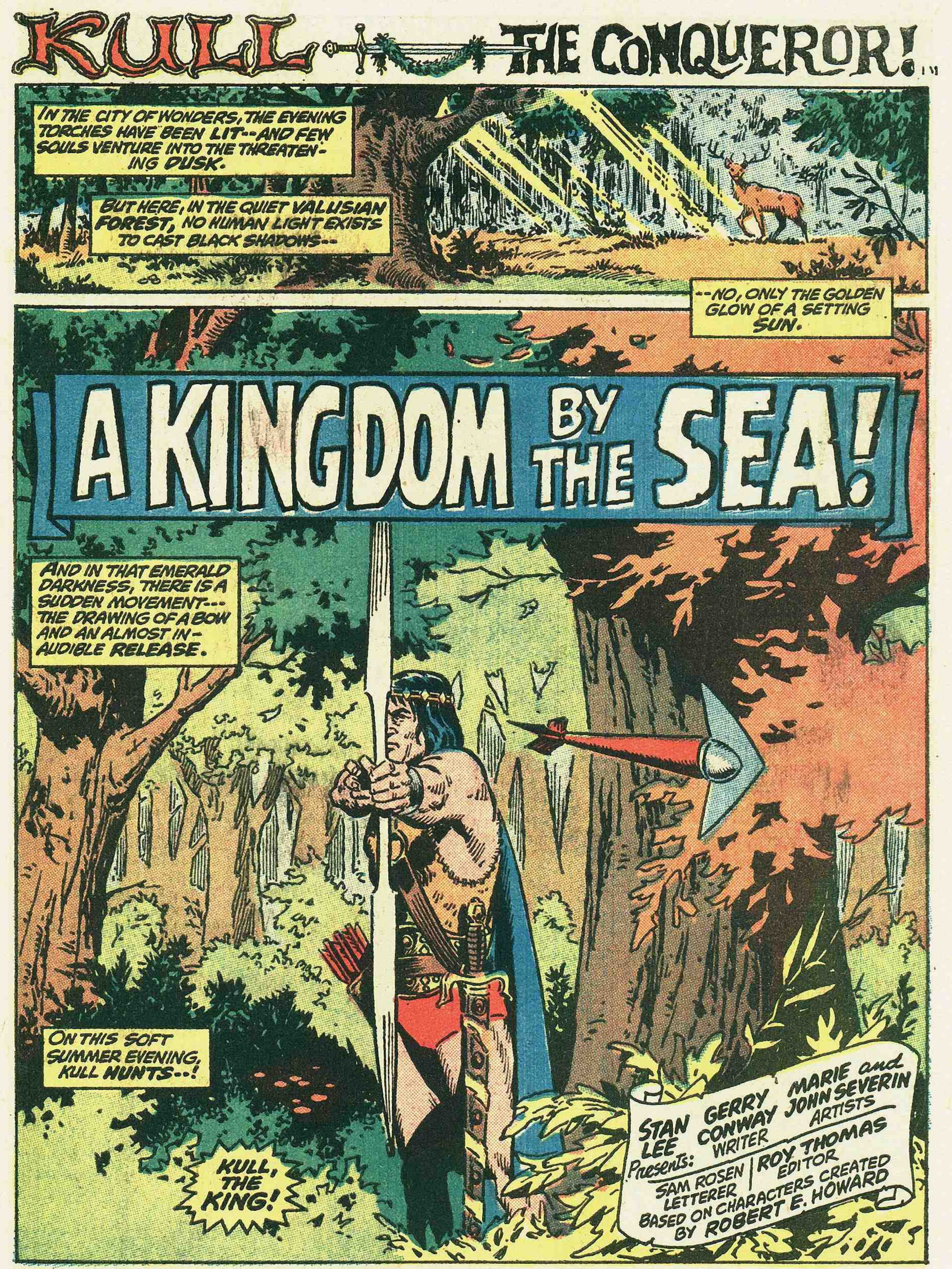
--HE GIVES THEM WHAT THEY DEMAND--AND STALKS FROM THE ECHOING CHAMBER--HIS EARS ONLY PARTIALLY SHUT TO THE HYSTERICAL CRIES BEHIND HIM--!



LIKE A CAGED CAT, HE MOVES THROUGH THE TORCHLIT CORRIDORS--EACH FLICKERING SHADOW SEEMING TO TAUNT HIM WITH POIGNANT FIRE-IMAGES, VISIONS OF THE MEN WHO WERE NOT MEN--THE MEN WHO DIED SOUNDLESSLY ON HIS BLADE, WHO MELTED WORDLESSLY ON HIS TORCH--
SUCH SILENCE APPALLS HIM--BUT NOT MUCH MORE TO HIS LIKING ARE THE MINDLESS APOLOGIES OF HIS CHAGRINED COUNCILLORS--
FINALLY, HE SENDS THEM AWAY.

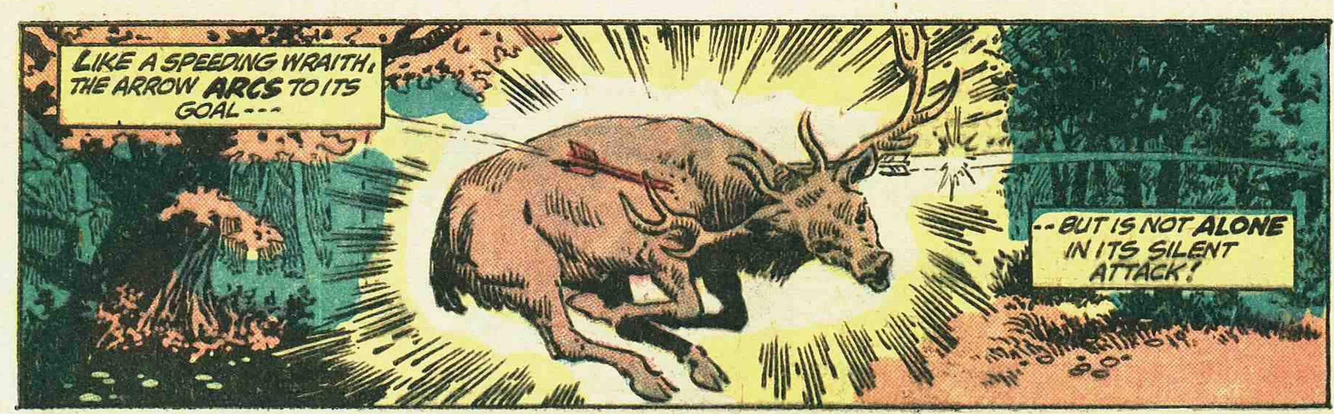


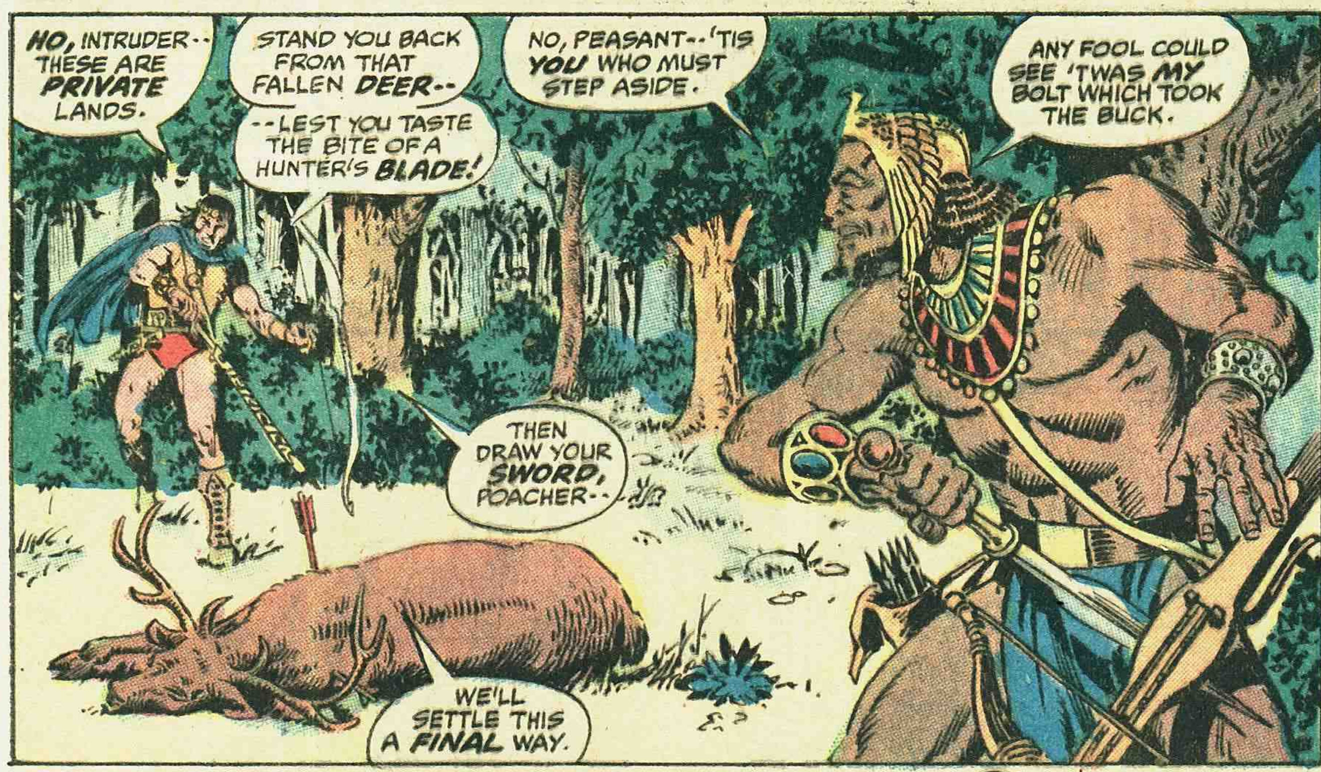
ONLY BRULE REMAINS--BRULE, WHOSE CONSIDERED SILENCE SOMEHOW SOOTHES KULL'S HEAT-WORN NERVES. HEAT...AYE, WASN'T IT ALL REALLY THE CURSED HEAT? ON IMPULSE, HE GOES TO THE NEARER BALCONY...
THE DAWN WIND IS COOL...AND ON ITS INVISIBLE HEELS...
...A COLD, GENTLE RAIN. KULL SMILES; THE LONG NIGHT, AT LAST...IS OVER.
Finis!



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1


LIKE A SPEEDING WRAITH, THE ARROW ARCS TO ITS GOAL---
--BUT IS NOT ALONE IN ITS SILENT ATTACK!


HO, INTRUDER--THESE ARE PRIVATE LANDS.
STAND YOU BACK FROM THAT FALLEN DEER--
--LEST YOU TASTE THE BITE OF A HUNTER'S BLADE!
NO, PEASANT--'TIS YOU WHO MUST STEP ASIDE.
ANY FOOL COULD SEE 'TWAS MY BOLT WHICH TOOK THE BUCK.
THEN DRAW YOUR SWORD, POACHER--
WE'LL SETTLE THIS A FINAL WAY.


AYE, HUNTER--BUT NOT YOUR WAY.
H'NAR KNOWS A MANNER MORE SURE!


SO QUICKLY DOES THE STRANGER MOVE, THAT KULL HAS TIME ONLY FOR REFLEX---
--YET, AS HE BEGINS TO DUCK--
VALKA AND HOTATH!





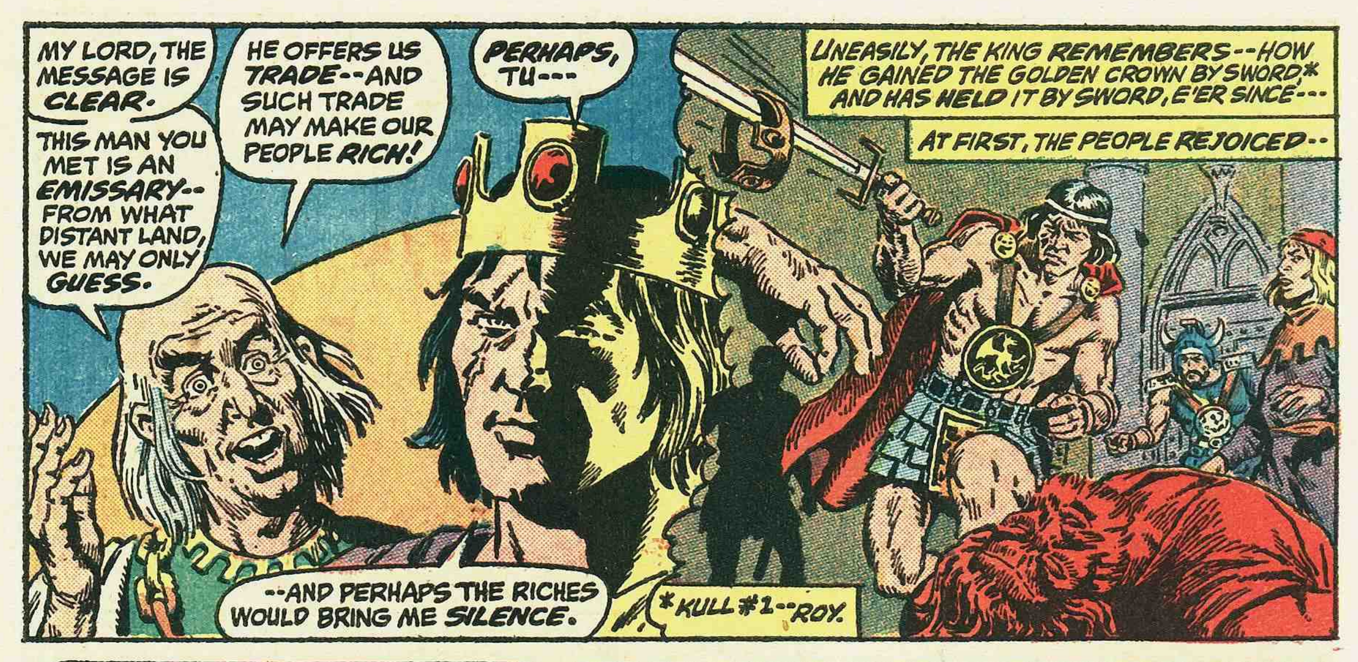






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MY LORD, THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR.
THIS MAN YOU MET IS AN EMISSARY-- FROM WHAT DISTANT LAND, WE MAY ONLY GUESS.
HE OFFERS US TRADE--AND SUCH TRADE MAY MAKE OUR PEOPLE RICH!
PERHAPS, TU---
--AND PERHAPS THE RICHES WOULD BRING ME SILENCE.
UNEASILY, THE KING REMEMBERS--HOW HE GAINED THE GOLDEN CROWN BY SWORD,* AND HAS HELD IT BY SWORD, E'ER SINCE---
AT FIRST, THE PEOPLE REJOICED--
*KULL #1--ROY.


--THEN, PROMPTED BY THOSE WHO WOULD PROFIT FROM KULL'S DEMISE, THEY BEGAN TO MUTTER WITH DISSATISFACTION.
THERE WERE BENEFITS TO TRADE--AYE, BENEFITS MOST CLEAR.


THE FOLLOWING MORNING THE HALL OF SOCIETY IS UNCOMMONLY FILLED--FOR INFORMATION TRAVELS QUICKLY IN A COURTLY SOCIETY, AS KULL WELL KNOWS.
AH, WE MEET AGAIN, HUNTER.
I SEE I WAS MIS-INFORMED WHEN LAST WE SPOKE.
NO MATTER.
SPEAK.


GOOD KING--MY NAME IS H'NAR, AND I AM REGENT PRINCE OF MY HOLY LAND.
I COME TO MAKE A PLEA---


THEN MAKE IT, PRINCE. I ASSURE YOU---
--YOU'RE AMONG FRIENDS.


"YOU ARE MOST KIND. AS YOU'VE SEEN FROM THE TRIBUTE I'VE SENT YOU, MY LAND IS A RICH AND PROS-PEROUS ONE-- AND YET WE ARE NOT WITHOUT OUR SHARE OF TRAGEDY---
"---FOR OUR SHIPS ARE SACKED, OUR CREWS SLAUGHTERED---
"--AND WE ARE POWERLESS TO STOP THE DEMONS WHO DO THIS---


FOR YEARS HAVE WE WARRED WITH OUR NEIGHBORING ISLE---
AND FOR YEARS HAVE WE SUFFERED--


---YET WITH YOUR AID-- WITH THE AID OF YOUR FAMED BLACK LEGION --WE STILL MAY TRIUMPH---

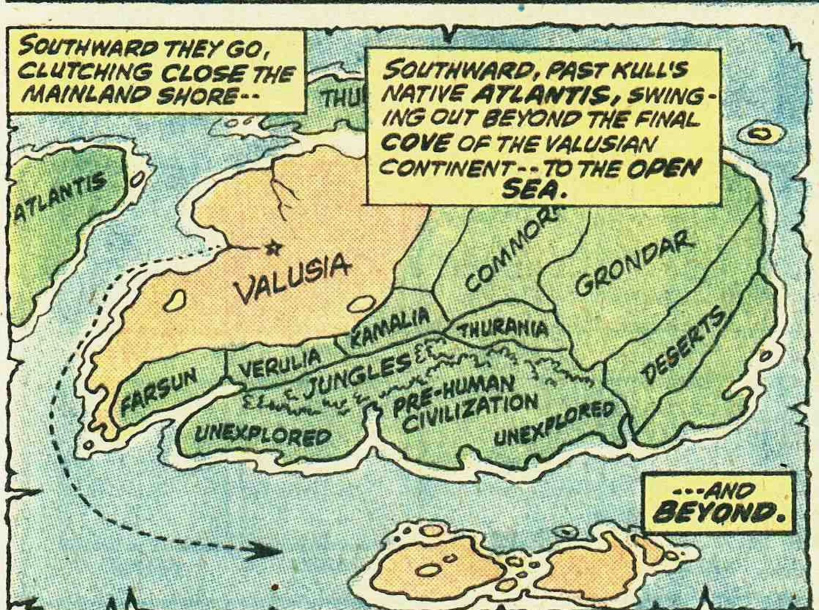

--AND IF TRIUMPH WE DO, WE SHALL BE MOST--- GRATEFUL---


--AND THE GRATITUDE OF DEMASCAR IS WELL WORTH THE EARNING.
KULL-- HE SPEAKS WELL.
KA-NU LIKES THIS PRINCE OF DEMASCAR.


YOUR GREED IS LEGEND, PICT--- BUT I AGREE.
THE PRINCE DOES SPEAK WELL---AND HIS PLIGHT TOUCHES MY HEART---
WE GO TO DEMASCAR---AND TO BE MY AIDES, I DESIGNATE THE BARON KANUUB AND HIS FRIENDLESS COMPANIONS.
COME, H'NAR--- WE'VE MUCH TO DISCUSS, YOU AND I
INDEED, O KING-- INDEED!

THE PREPARATIONS GO QUICKLY, ACCOMPANIED BY A SENSE OF BUILDING EXCITEMENT IN THE PEOPLE OF VALUSIA-- TOO LONG HAS THE ANCIENT NATION LIVED IN PEACE; THE FLAME OF WAR FINDS GOOD KINDLING IN THE DECADENT SOULS OF PEASANT AND NOBLE ALIKE---
--AND THOUGH HE GREETS THE COMING BATTLE WITH GRIM FAVOR, KULL CANNOT BUT FEEL DISGUST WITH HIS ENTHUSIASTIC SUBJECTS---
-- FOR 'TIS NOT THEY WHO STUDY NEW WEAPONS OF WAR, WHO PREPARE MIGHTY SHIPS-- WHO SLEEP WITH RESTLESS FEAR---
--'TIS NOT THEY WHO WILL FIGHT--AND YEA, PERHAPS DIE-- ON A DISTANT, PAINFULLY ALIEN SHORE!











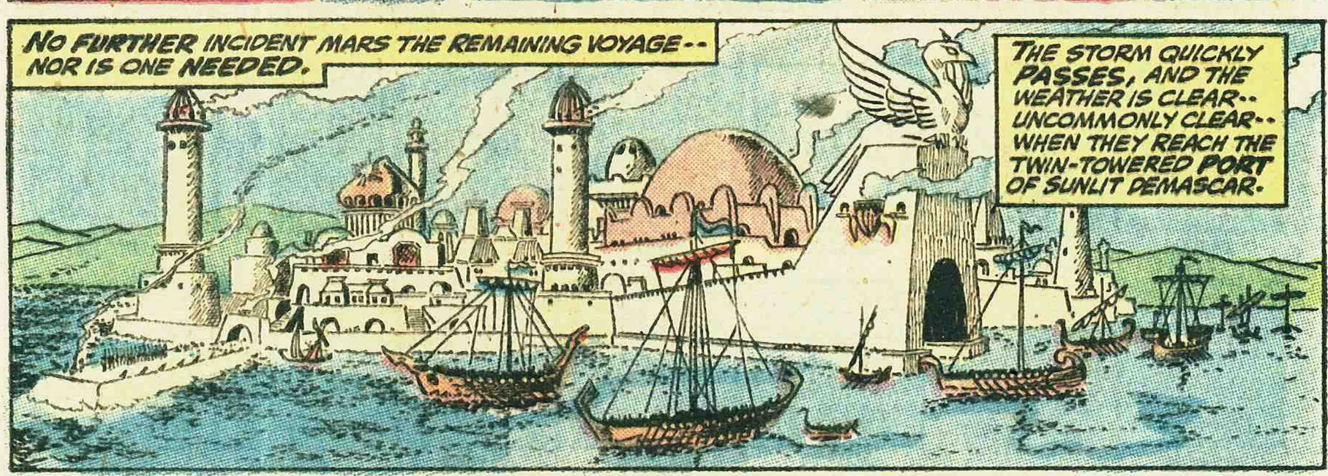


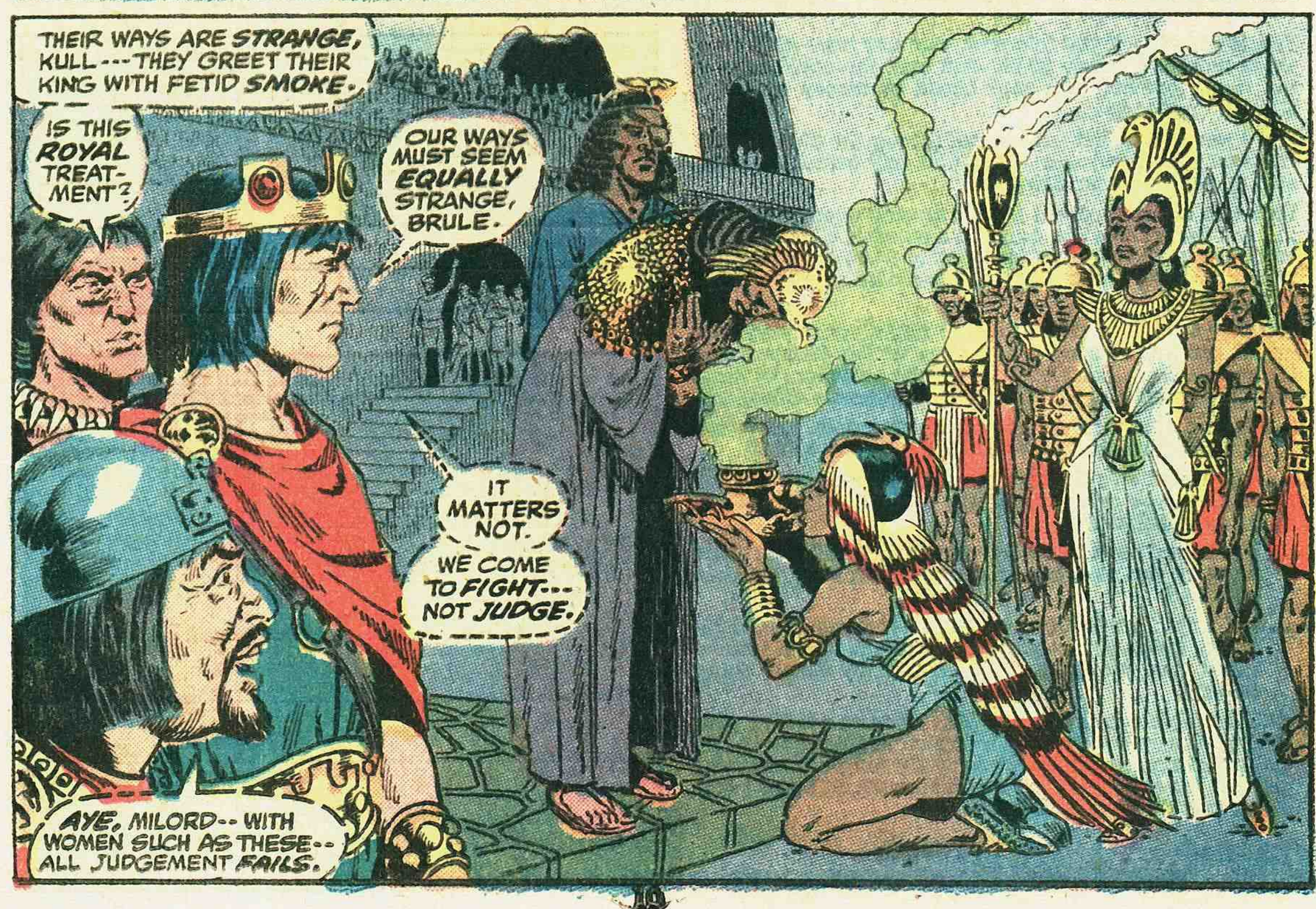
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NOR IS HE MADE MORE CERTAIN MOMENTS LATER, WHEN, UPON THE HIGHEST RIGGING, THE YOUNG SAILOR GOES SUDDENLY RIGID--

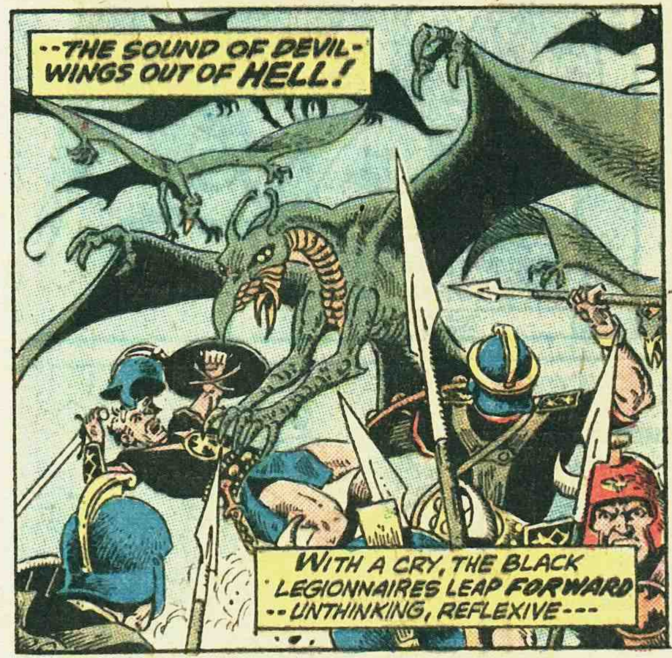

--AND, SILENT-- PLUMMETS TO A DISTANT DEATH.


I DON'T LIKE IT, BRULE. A DEATH SO EARLY IN THIS CAMPAIGN--
ACCIDENTS ARE DARK OMENS--
--IF ACCIDENT IT WERE.


NO FURTHER INCIDENT MARS THE REMAINING VOYAGE-- NOR IS ONE NEEDED.
THE STORM QUICKLY PASSES, AND THE WEATHER IS CLEAR-- UNCOMMONLY CLEAR-- WHEN THEY REACH THE TWIN-TOWERED PORT OF SUNLIT DEMASCAR.


THEIR WAYS ARE STRANGE, KULL---THEY GREET THEIR KING WITH FETID SMOKE.
IS THIS ROYAL TREAT-MENT?
OUR WAYS MUST SEEM EQUALLY STRANGE, BRULE.
IT MATTERS NOT.
WE COME TO FIGHT--- NOT JUDGE.
AYE, MILORD-- WITH WOMEN SUCH AS THESE-- ALL JUDGEMENT FAILS.





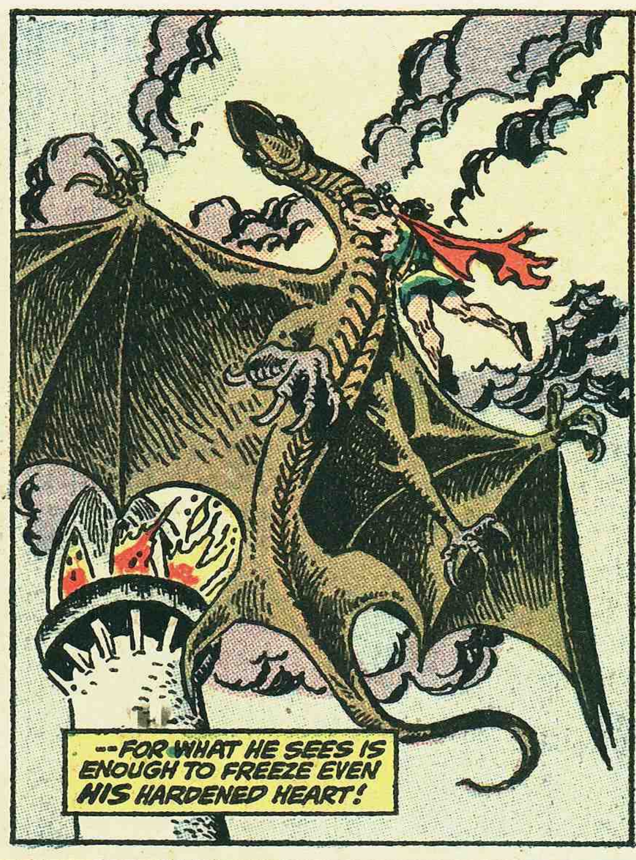


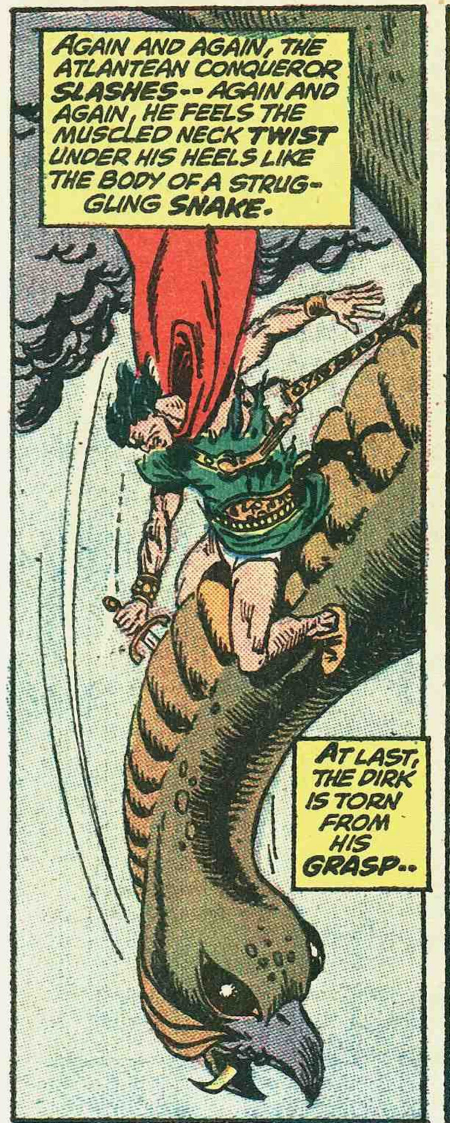




ONLY A RAT-- WOULD MISS "THE CLAWS OF THE CAT!" 11











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KULL, ARE YOU WELL?
SUCH A FALL--BUT NO. I SEE THE ANSWER IN YOUR EYES.
QUIET, PICT--
GIVE ME YOUR SWORD--


--FOR THERE HAS BEEN DECEIT---
WHICH ONLY BLOOD MAY SET ARIGHT!


STAND, PRINCE--WE MUST HAVE WORDS, YOU AND I.
YOU DID NOT TELL ME YOUR ENEMY WORKED BLACK SORCERY---
--PERHAPS YOU FEARED I'D REFUSE YOUR BLOODY BARGAIN!
PERHAPS SO, KULL!


YET IF I MISLED YOU, GOOD KING---I DID SO WITH NO EVIL INTENT.
I WISH ONLY TO SALVE THE WOUNDS OF MY PEOPLE---WITH YOUR KIND AID.
YOU'LL HAVE THAT AID, H'NAR---BUT FOR US, IT WILL BE VENGEANCE--!
THEN WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER, KULL.
I AM GLAD.

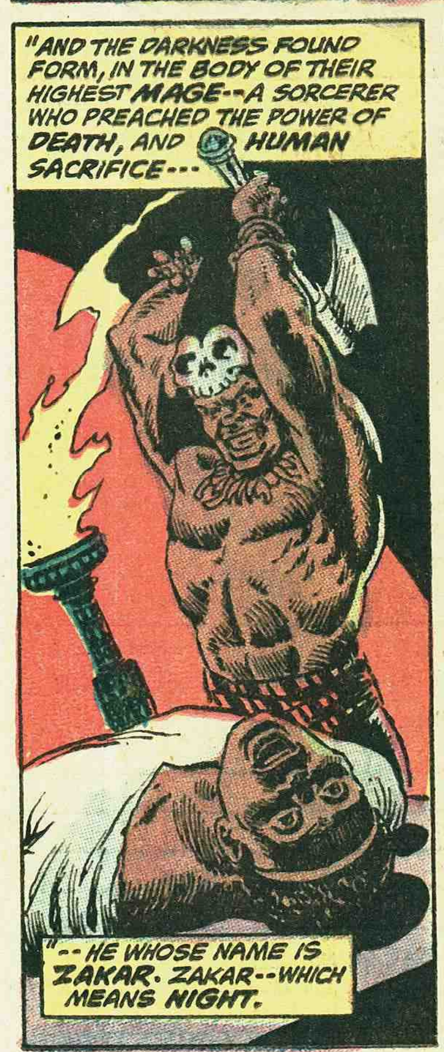

THAT EVENING, BRIEF COUNCIL IS HEARD IN THE KING'S GIVEN QUARTERS, AND WHEN ALL SPEECHES ARE DONE, KULL'S VOICE RINGS CLEAR---
IT IS SETTLED, THEN.
A SINGLE RAID ON THE ISLE OF RIKOS--TO WIN BACK THE BLOOD OF OUR FALLEN COMRADES.
BUT LET IT BE KNOWN--
DUCALON OF KOMAHAR HOLDS TO NO SUCH TRAITOROUS DEAL!
'TIS KULL'S--ALONE!


THE COUNT'S WORDS ECHO LONG AFTER HIS PARTING--AND WEIGH HEAVILY ON THE BARBARIAN'S TROUBLED SOUL, UNTIL---


MILORD, MAY I ENTER?
I HAVE SOMETHING OF IMPORT TO SHOW YOU.



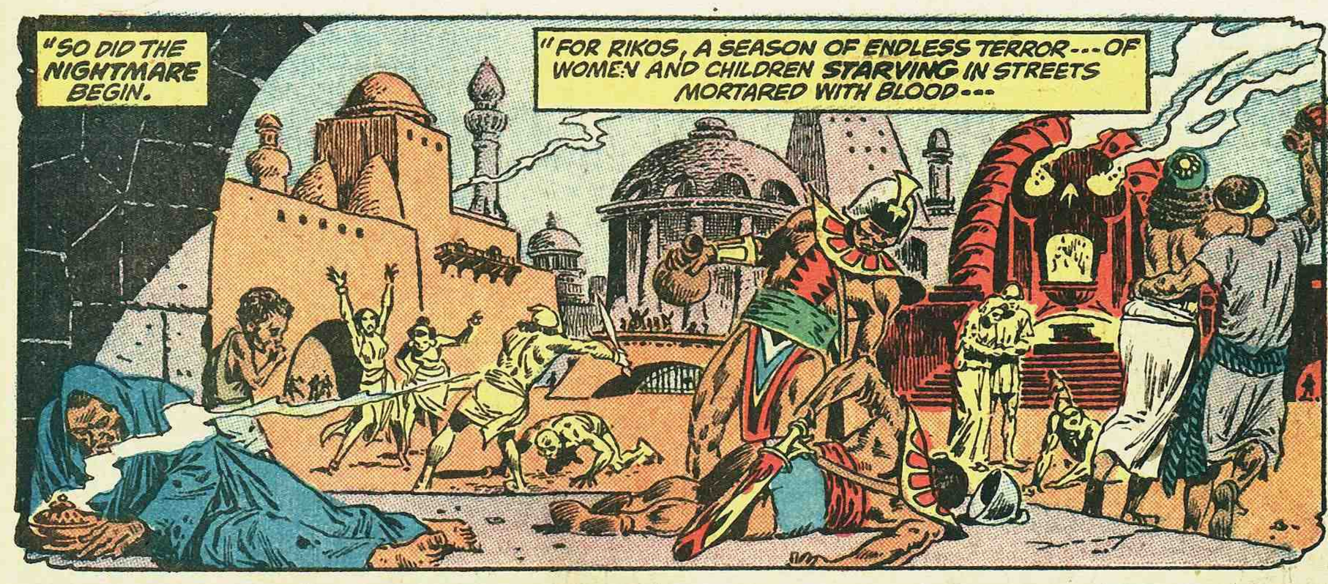


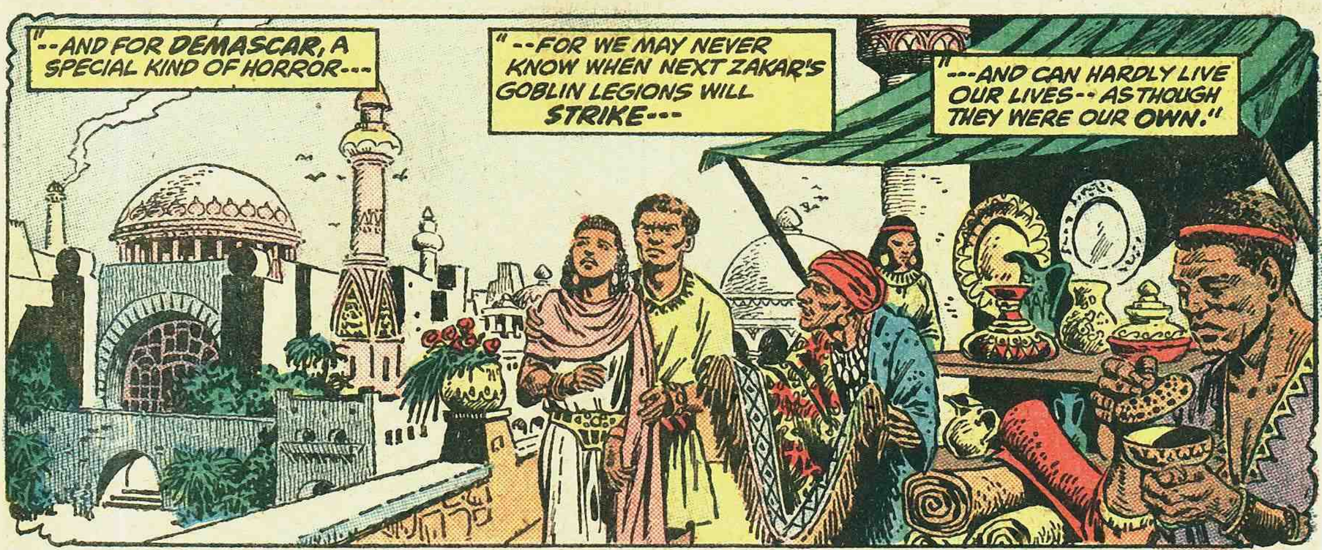






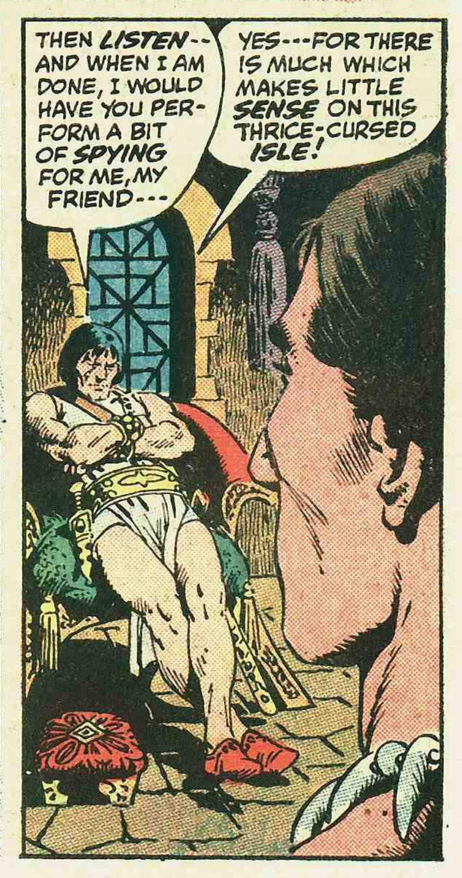
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"SO DID THE NIGHTMARE BEGIN.
"FOR RIKOS, A SEASON OF ENDLESS TERROR---OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN STARVING IN STREETS MORTARED WITH BLOOD---


"--AND FOR DEMASCAR, A SPECIAL KIND OF HORROR---
"--FOR WE MAY NEVER KNOW WHEN NEXT ZAKAR'S GOBLIN LEGIONS WILL STRIKE---
"---AND CAN HARDLY LIVE OUR LIVES--AS THOUGH THEY WERE OUR OWN."


A SAD TALE, WOMAN --ONE DESIGNED TO MAKE ME WEEP, I SUPPOSE?
WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO, WITCH?
WHATEVER YOUR HEART TELLS YOU TO DO, MI-LORD.
LEAVE ME, GIRL!


BRULE, MY BRAIN IS AWHIRL.
LEND ME THE USE OF YOUR PICTISH COOL, EH, MY FRIEND?
MY LIEGE, IT IS YOURS.


THEN LISTEN--AND WHEN I AM DONE, I WOULD HAVE YOU PER-FORM A BIT OF SPYING FOR ME, MY FRIEND---
YES---FOR THERE IS MUCH WHICH MAKES LITTLE SENSE ON THIS THRICE-CURSED ISLE!


MEANWHILE, IN YET ANOTHER CHAMBER OF THE ROYAL PALACE---
RIDONDO--- WILL YOU HELP US OR NOT?
OR DO YOU STILL SULK?
--WOUNDED, AND WITHOUT AN AUDIENCE FOR YOUR FUTILE SONGS?


I MERELY PONDER, MY DEAR COUNT.
THIS CASTLE STINKS OF EVIL---AND IT WORRIES ME.
SAVE YOUR WORRYING, MINSTREL.
THIS LETTER TO THE PRINCE MAY SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS--
---AND KULL'S AS WELL!


M'KU---YOU MUST SEE THIS.
CERTAIN OF OUR GUEST NOBLEMEN WISH TO SEE HIM---"ELIMINATED"--
--AND HINT AT FUTURE REWARD--SHOULD OUR HANDS DO THE DEED!
IT MUST BE ANSWERED, MILORD--


"---WITH A REMINDER OF THE TRAITOR'S OWN REWARD---A SUBTLE JEST, BUT CERTAINLY AN AMUSING ONE."


THE TOWER GUARDS SLEEP, PICT--THAT BREW WE GAVE THEM WILL BLESS THEM SO FOR HOURS.
DO YOU NEED HELP WITH THAT ROPE?.
I THINK NOT, ALECTO.
STAY HERE AND KEEP GOOD WATCH---


---AND WARN ME QUICKLY IF ANYONE COMES!
A SPY ON A "FRIENDLY" KING CAN NEVER BE WELCOME.







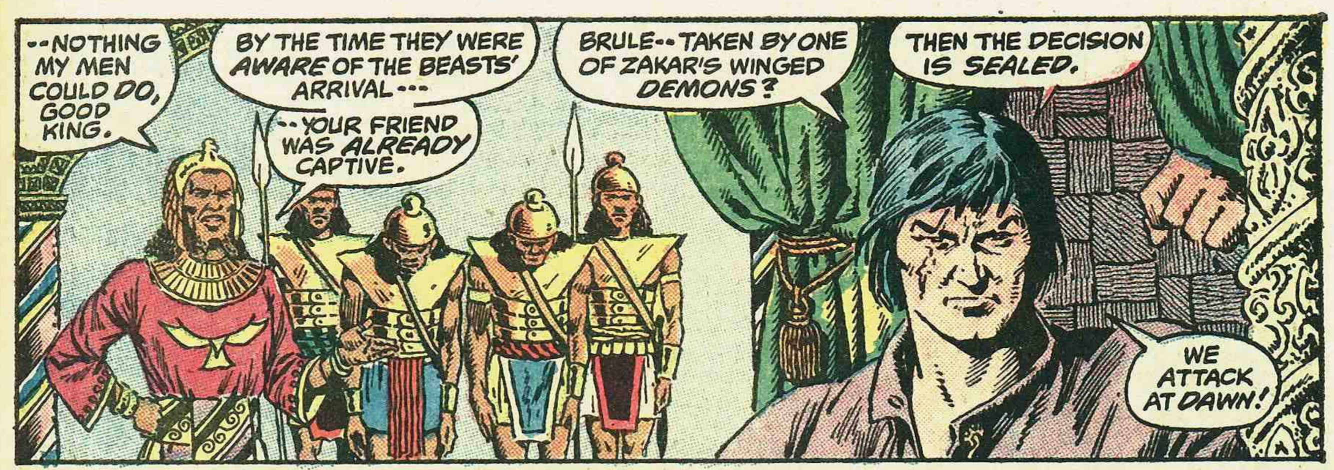


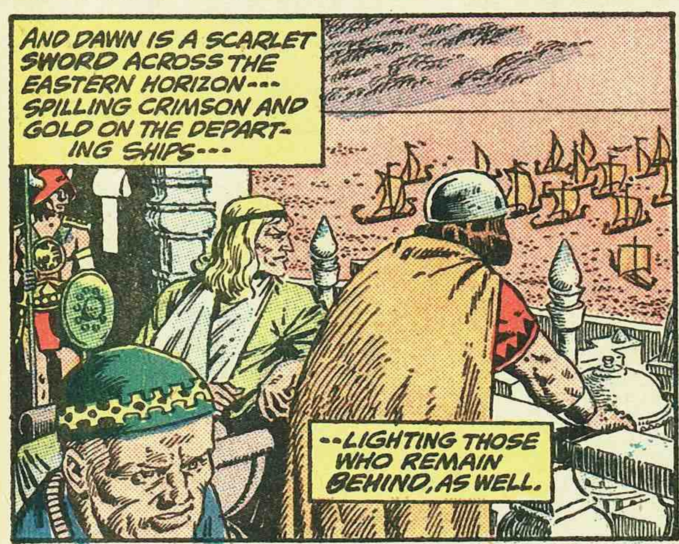




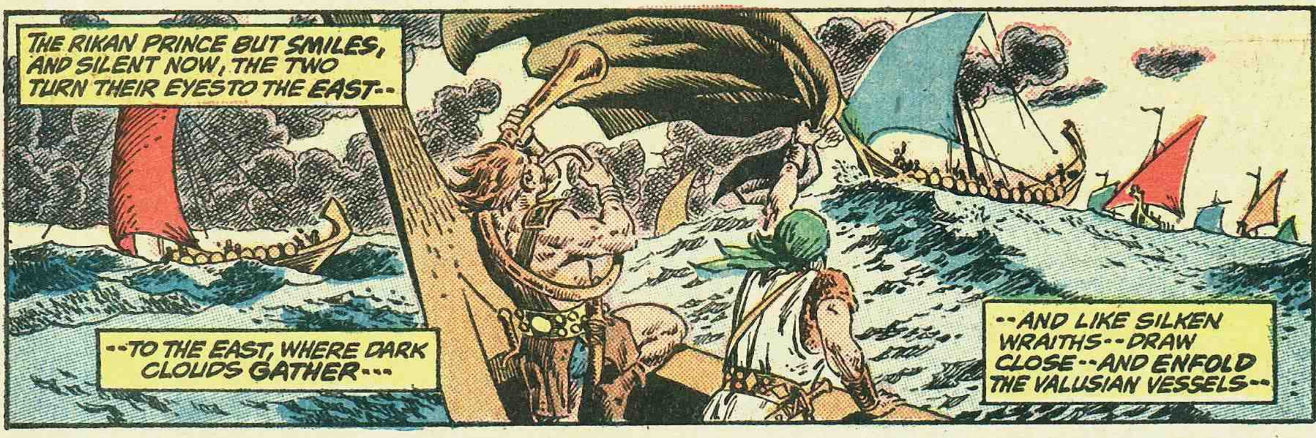


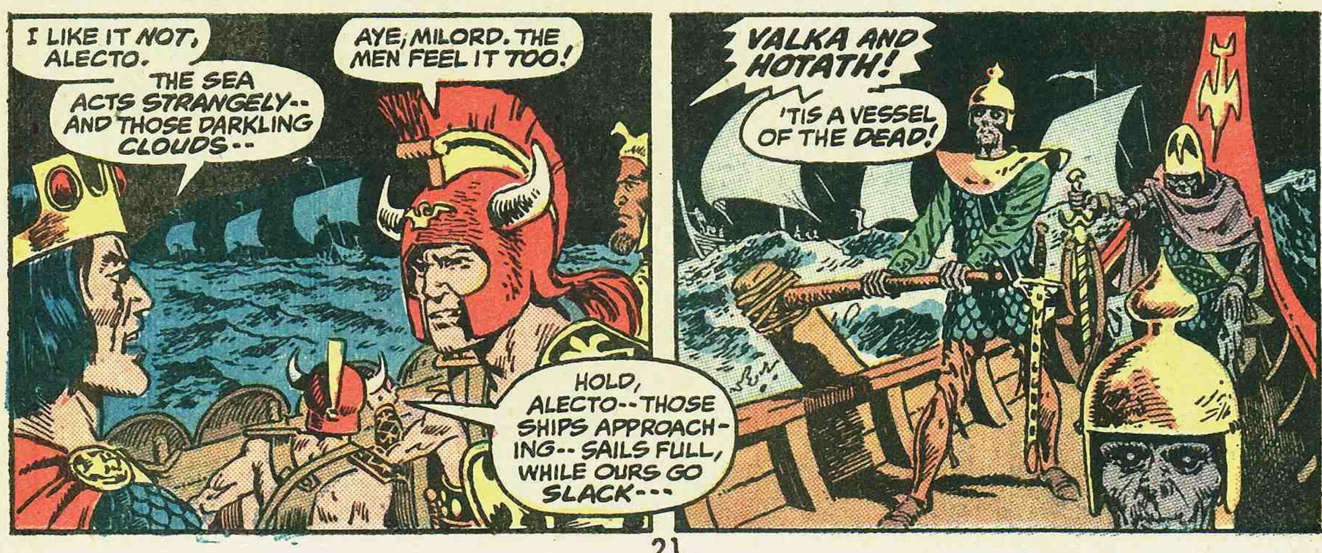
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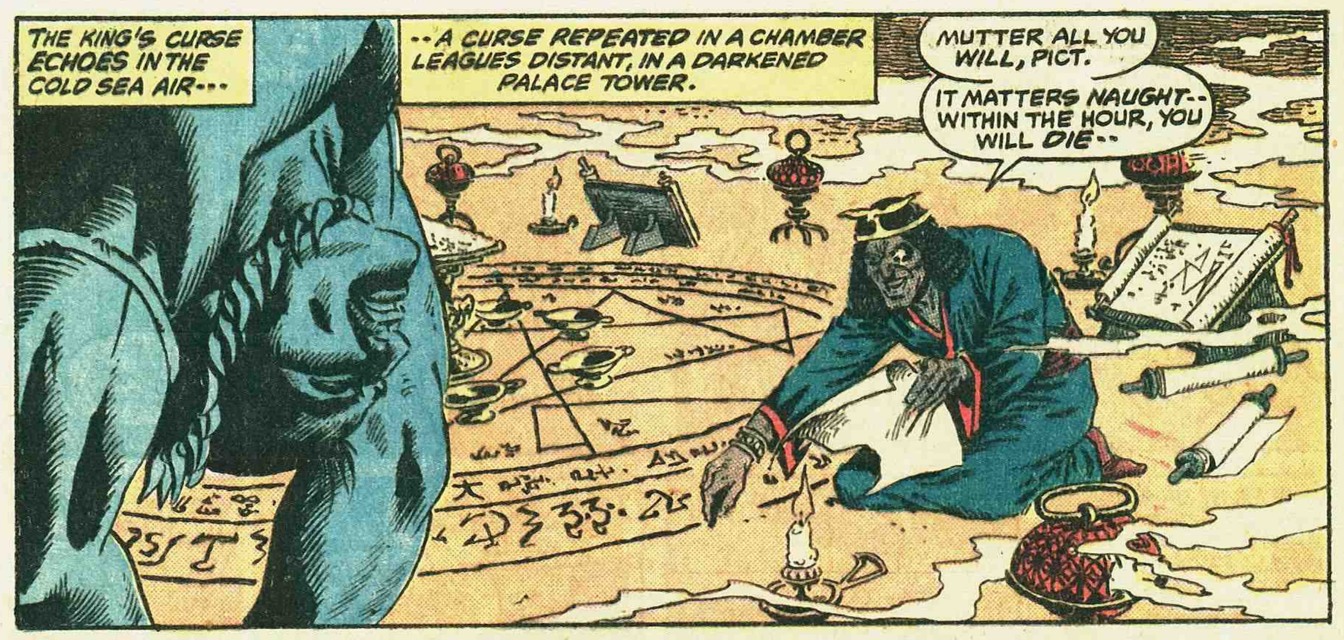

--NOTHING MY MEN COULD DO, GOOD KING.
BY THE TIME THEY WERE AWARE OF THE BEASTS' ARRIVAL---
--YOUR FRIEND WAS ALREADY CAPTIVE.
BRULE--TAKEN BY ONE OF ZAKAR'S WINGED DEMONS?
THEN THE DECISION IS SEALED.
WE ATTACK AT DAWN!


AND DAWN IS A SCARLET SWORD ACROSS THE EASTERN HORIZON---SPILLING CRIMSON AND GOLD ON THE DEPARTING SHIPS---
--LIGHTING THOSE WHO REMAIN BEHIND, AS WELL.


I'M AFRAID I MISS YOUR COUNSELORS, KULL.
HAVE THEY NO STOMACH FOR BATTLE?
THAT THEY HAVE, H'NAR--
BUT I TRUST THEM LESS--THAN I TRUST RIKOS' VILE HORDES.

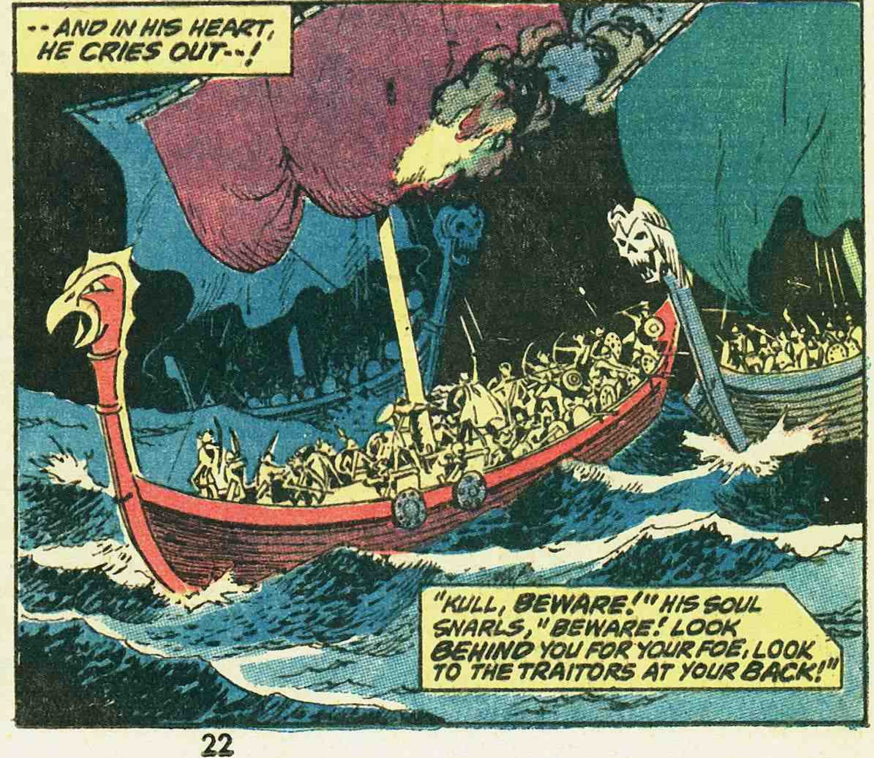

THE RIKAN PRINCE BUT SMILES, AND SILENT NOW, THE TWO TURN THEIR EYES TO THE EAST--
--TO THE EAST, WHERE DARK CLOUDS GATHER---
--AND LIKE SILKEN WRAITHS--DRAW CLOSE--AND ENFOLD THE VALUSIAN VESSELS--

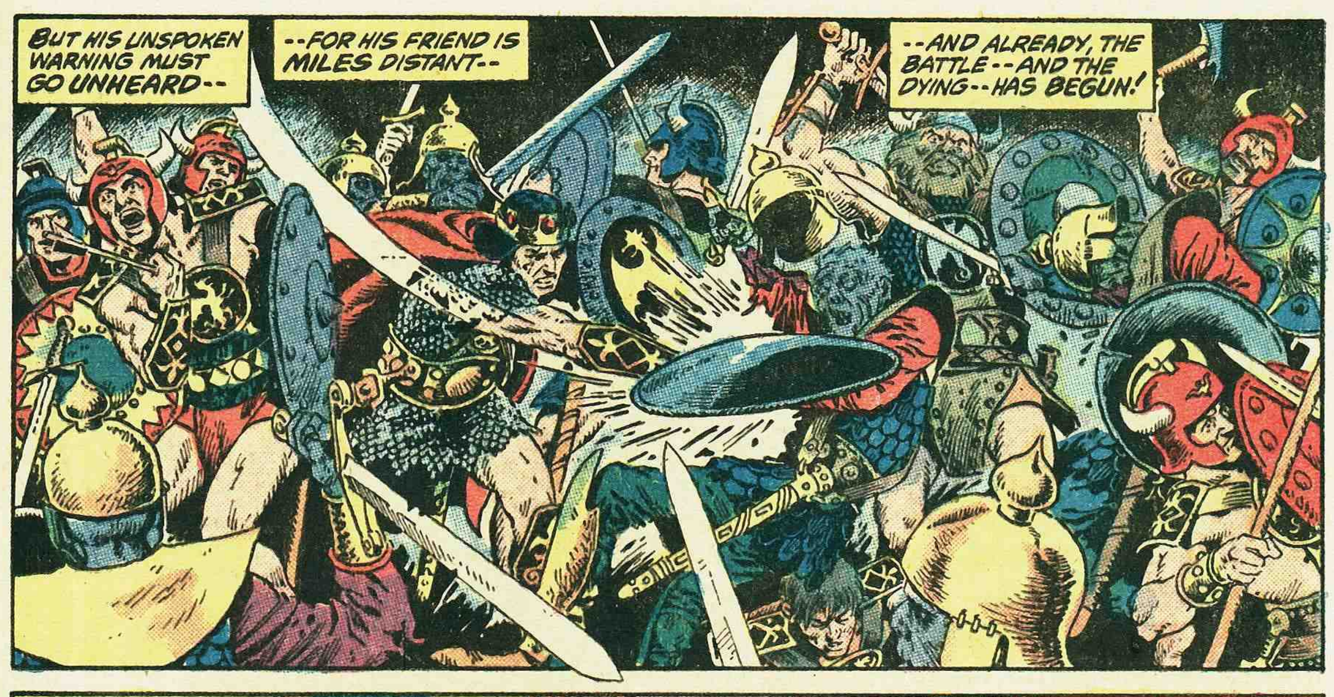

I LIKE IT NOT, ALECTO.
THE SEA ACTS STRANGELY--AND THOSE DARKLING CLOUDS--
AYE, MILORD. THE MEN FEEL IT TOO!
HOLD, ALECTO--THOSE SHIPS APPROACHING--SAILS FULL, WHILE OURS GO SLACK---
VALKA AND HOTATH!
'TIS A VESSEL OF THE DEAD!

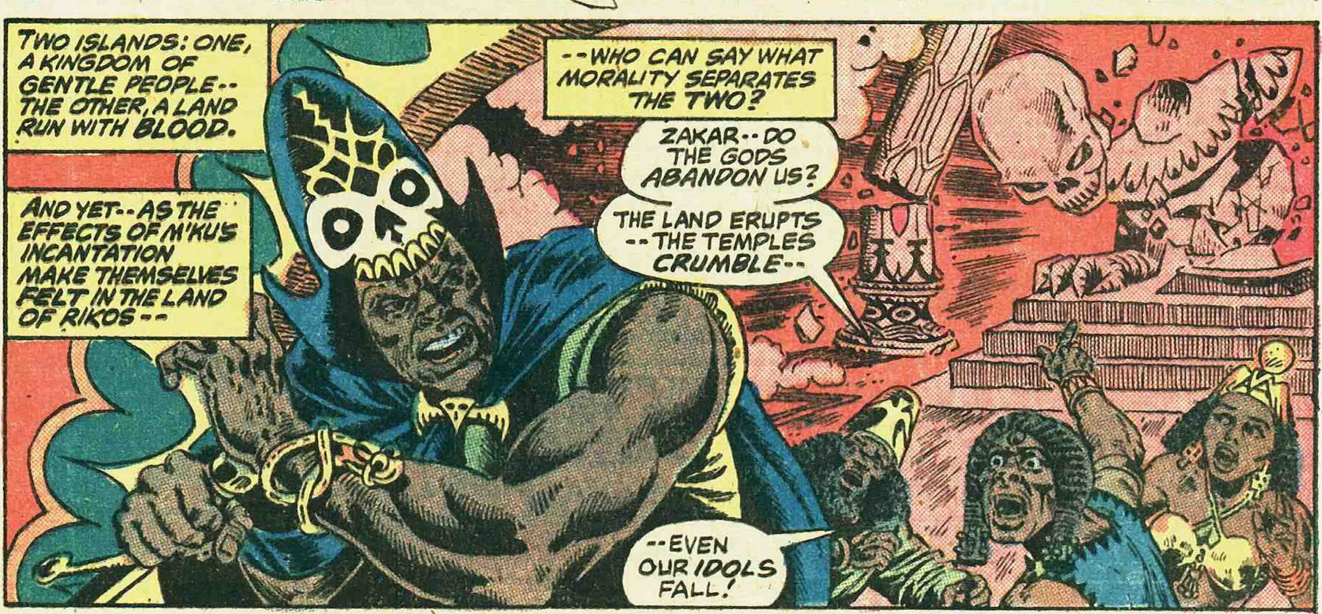

THE KING'S CURSE ECHOES IN THE COLD SEA AIR---
--A CURSE REPEATED IN A CHAMBER LEAGUES DISTANT, IN A DARKENED PALACE TOWER.
MUTTER ALL YOU WILL, PICT.
IT MATTERS NAUGHT-- WITHIN THE HOUR, YOU WILL DIE--


AND YOURS WILL BE THE LAST DEATH--- THE SEALING OF THE SPELL--
FOR WHEN KULL AND ALL HIS MEN ARE DEAD--THEIR LIFE-FORCE WILL SUPPLY THE STRENGTH WE NEED--
--AND RIKOS WILL EXIST---NO MORE!


GRIM, BRULE'S THOUGHTS STEAL OUTWARD. IN HIS MIND'S EYE, HE ALMOST SEES THE SCENE, THE EARLY MOMENTS OF THE DEATH-SHIP'S ATTACK--


--AND IN HIS HEART, HE CRIES OUT--!
"KULL, BEWARE!" HIS SOUL SNARLS, "BEWARE! LOOK BEHIND YOU FOR YOUR FOE, LOOK TO THE TRAITORS AT YOUR BACK!"

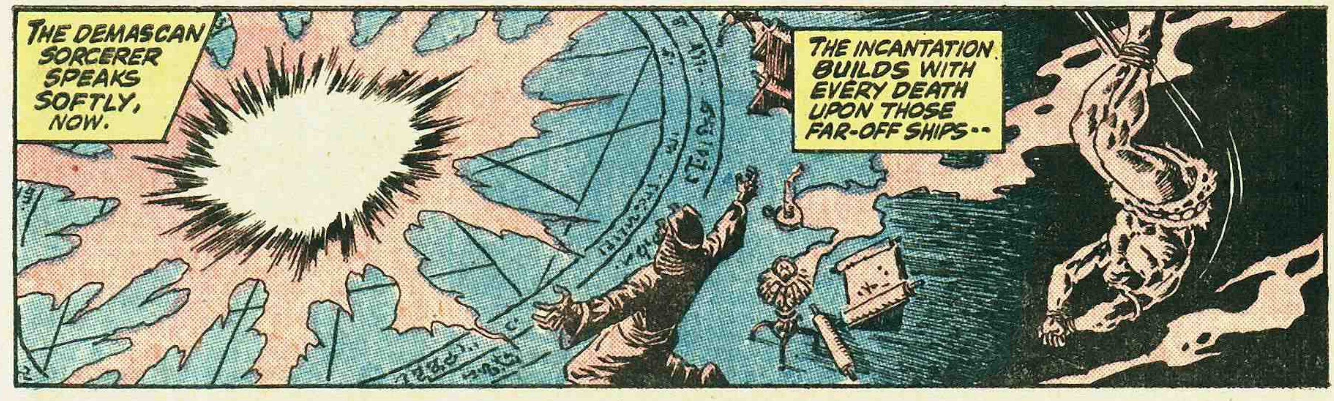








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THE DEMASCAN SORCERER SPEAKS SOFTLY, NOW.
THE INCANTATION BUILDS WITH EVERY DEATH UPON THOSE FAR-OFF SHIPS--


--DEATHS CAUSED BY M'KU'S OWN HAND--

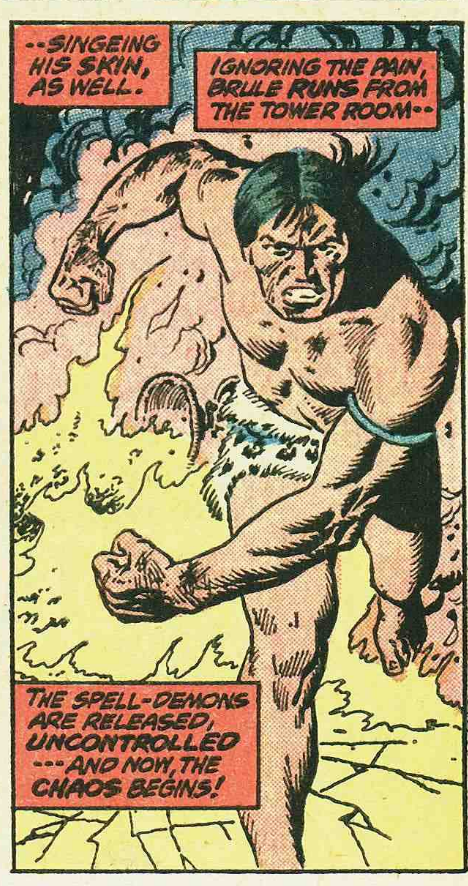

--FOR 'TIS HIS SPELL WHICH HAS CREATED THE DEMONS WHO ATTACK THE VALUSIAN WARRIORS.
THIS BRULE KNOWS, AS HE STRAINS TO START HIS BODY SWINGING--

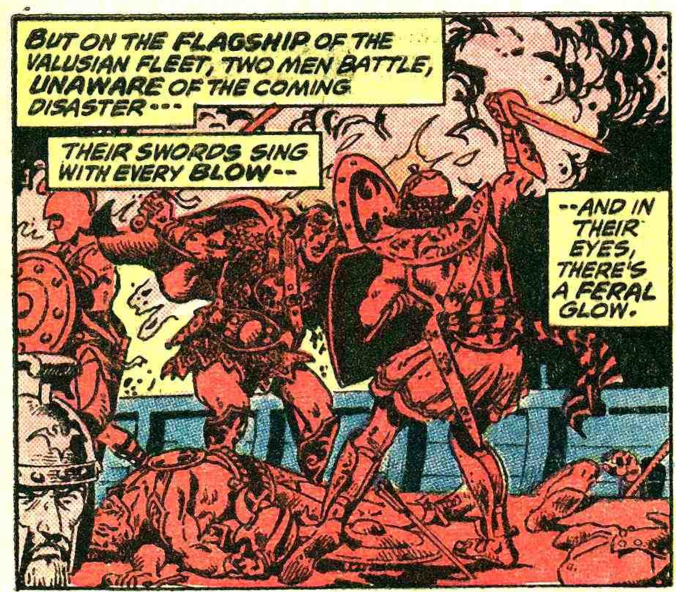

--AND IT FIRES HIS DETERMINATION--


--UNTIL FINALLY, WITH ONE FINAL LUNGE OF JUNGLE-TRAINED MUSCLES---
NOW, WIZARD--THE TIME HAS COME FOR YOUR SPELLS TO CEASE--
URRRRKK!


--AND FOR YOU---TO DIE!


UPSET BY THE SORCERER'S UNTIMELY FALL, THE FIRE SPILLS FROM ITS BOWL, FLAME LEAPING HIGH IN THE DARKENED CHAMBER---
--BURNING THE ROPES FROM THE PICT'S STEADY HANDS--


--SINGEING HIS SKIN, AS WELL.
IGNORING THE PAIN, BRULE RUNS FROM THE TOWER ROOM--
THE SPELL-DEMONS ARE RELEASED, UNCONTROLLED---AND NOW, THE CHAOS BEGINS!


BUT ON THE FLAGSHIP OF THE VALUSIAN FLEET, TWO MEN BATTLE, UNAWARE OF THE COMING DISASTER---
THEIR SWORDS SING WITH EVERY BLOW--
--AND IN THEIR EYES, THERE'S A FERAL GLOW.

SO THE BATTLE PROCEEDS, MEN AGAINST NOT-MEN, DEAD THINGS WHICH CANNOT DIE AGAIN---
--BUT CAN BE SUDDENLY DIS-SOLVED, WHEN THE SPELL WHICH BINDS THEM --NO LONGER EXISTS!

FIERCELY, KULL PRESSES HIS RIKAN OPPONENT-- AND IS EQUALLY PRESSED IN TURN.
BOTH MEN GIVE THEIR ALL TO THE SWORDPLAY BETWEEN THEM--

--ALL, THAT IS, UNTIL H'NAR REALIZES WHAT HAPPENS AROUND HIM---
--AND FOR ONE, FATAL SECOND--HESITATES, CONFUSED.

KULL IS UNABLE TO HALT HIS SWORD--
AND IN AN INSTANT, IT IS DONE.

I DIDN'T MEAN TO END IT THIS WAY, RIKAN.
THERE'S NO GLORY IN SLAYING A DISTRACTED MAN...
...EVEN ONE WHO TRADES IN DARK DECEIT.
BUT THE FACT REMAINS, BARBARIAN-- YOU'VE WON.
LOOK-- THE CONCEAL-ING CLOUDS LIFT--

--AND THERE-- THE ISLAND!
DEMASCAR!
THEN-- WE NEVER LEFT THE COAST.
BUT THOSE FIRES --THE DISTANT ERUP-TIONS--
M'KU'S SPELL BETRAYS US---







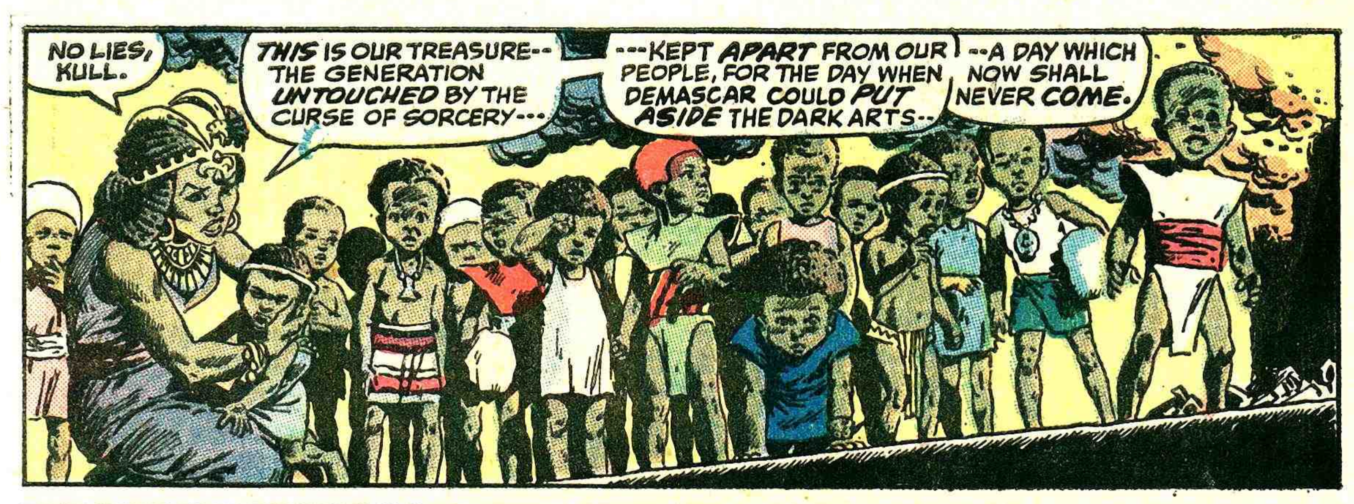






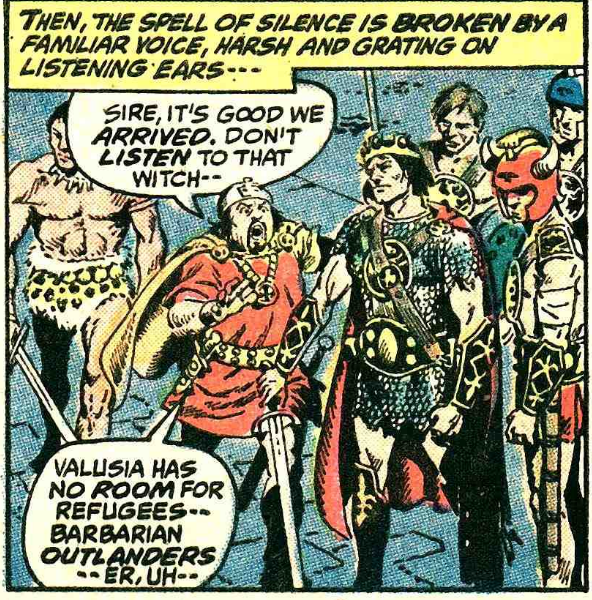


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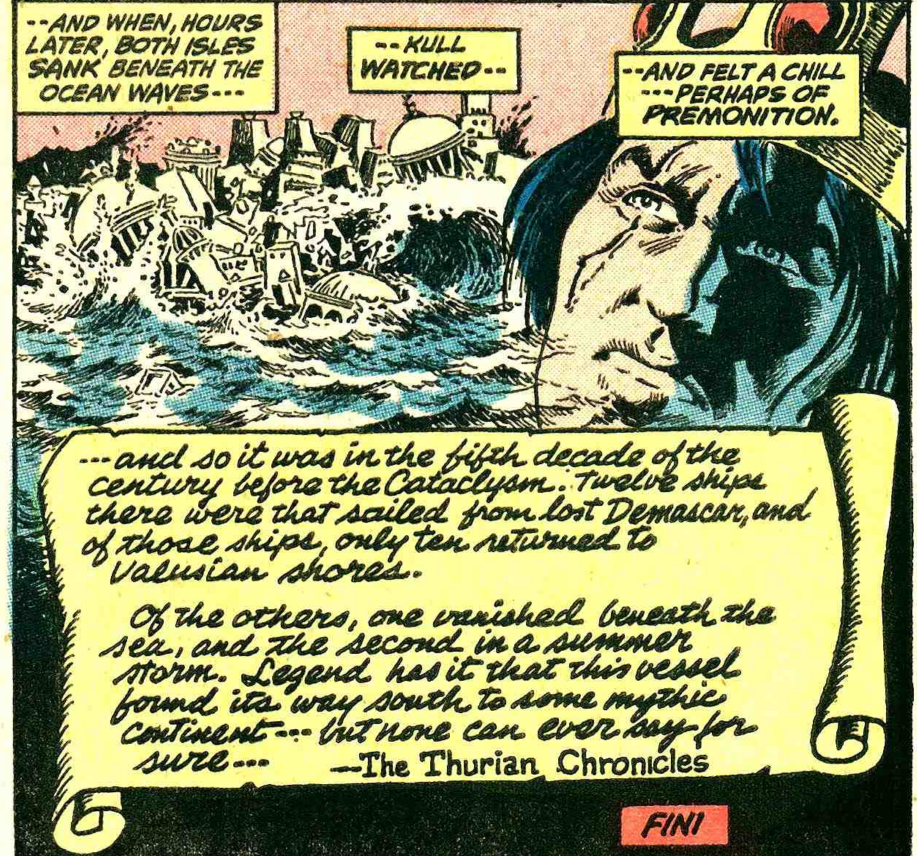

NO LIES, KULL.
THIS IS OUR TREASURE-- THE GENERATION UNTOUCHED BY THE CURSE OF SORCERY---
---KEPT APART FROM OUR PEOPLE, FOR THE DAY WHEN DEMASCAR COULD PUT ASIDE THE DARK ARTS--
--A DAY WHICH NOW SHALL NEVER COME.


H'NAR'S AMBITION HAS DESTROYED OUR LAND-- EVEN NOW, THE TWO ISLANDS BEGIN TO SINK.
I PRAY THEE, KULL --SAVE THEM, IF NOT US.
THEY ARE INNOCENT OF OUR SIN.


KULL IS SILENT--HIS EXPRESSION, UN-READABLE---HIS EYES, COLD AND GRIM.


THEN, THE SPELL OF SILENCE IS BROKEN BY A FAMILIAR VOICE, HARSH AND GRATING ON LISTENING EARS---
SIRE, IT'S GOOD WE ARRIVED. DON'T LISTEN TO THAT WITCH--
VALUSIA HAS NO ROOM FOR REFUGEES-- BARBARIAN OUTLANDERS --ER, UH--


MY THANKS, KANUUB. YOU'VE MADE MY DECISION CLEAR.
TAKE THEM ABOARD!
AND SO KULL DID LEAVE THE ISLES OF RIKOS AND DEMASCAR--


--AND WHEN, HOURS LATER, BOTH ISLES SANK BENEATH THE OCEAN WAVES---
--KULL WATCHED--
--AND FELT A CHILL ---PERHAPS OF PREMONITION.
---and so it was in the fifth decade of the century before the Cataclysm. Twelve ships there were that sailed from lost Demascar, and of those ships, only ten returned to Valusian shores.
Of the others, one vanished beneath the sea, and the second in a summer storm. Legend has it that this vessel found its way south to some mythic continent--- but none can ever say for sure--- —The Thurian Chronicles
FINI



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HHSSSSSS
VALKA, BRULE, BUT THESE SNAKE-HEADS GROW MORE SAVAGE WITH EACH CREW WE ENCOUNTER!
AIEEEE
NOT MORE SAVAGE MERELY, KULL...
...BUT ALSO MORE DESPERATE.
FOR, THESE MUST BE THE LAST OF THOSE WHO STAND BETWIXT OURSELVES...
...AND OUR GOAL, WHICH LIES NOW NEARLY IN OUR SIGHT.
AYE...AND THERE FALLS THE LAST OF THE LAST, AT GOOD SHANNA'S HAND.
ALECTO... GIVE ME THE COUNTING, MAN.
WHAT ARE OUR LOSSES?
ONLY ONE RED SLAYER FALLEN, SIRE...YOUNG DURON HERE.
HIS SIDE WAS PIERCED BY A CULT-KNIFE...HE BREATHES HIS LAST.
MILORD KULL... HEAR M-ME...
SIRE...Y-YOU KNOW THE LEGENDS WHICH SAY... THAT HE WHO IS SLAIN BY A SNAKEMAN'S HAND... SHALL SERVE THEM E'EN AFTER DEATH!
L-LET A KING'S BLADE DEAL THE DEATH-STROKE, I PRITHEE...LEST I BE DAMNED FOR ALL TIME...!
SET THY MIND AT REST, LOYAL WARRIOR.
KULL SHALL DO... WHAT MUST BE DONE.
2







WHAT SEES KING KULL WITHIN THE MANY-FACETED RECESSES OF THE SERPENT-EYE GEM, STOLEN YEARS AGONE BY PICTS FROM THE GRIM TEMPLE WHICH LOOMS BEYOND THE WRITHING WATERS?

DOES HE VIEW THE SLOW INROADS MADE BY THE SNAKE-HEADED DEMI-MEN IN HIS KINGDOM, ERE HE ROSE TO THWART THEM AND ANNIHILATE THEM?

DOES HE GLIMPSE HINTS, MAYHAP, OF THE DARK ROAD WHICH LIES BEYOND THE END OF THIS DAY'S PATH?

OR DOES HE SEE-- --NOTHING--?








SO POLE AWAY, LADS, AND SOON OUR SWORDS WILL END THIS MENACE TO--
WHAT IS THIS? WHY DO WE TILT SO WILDLY?
THE WATERS, MILORD-- SOMETHING STIRS THEM TO TUBULENCE--!
IS IT MERE CHANCE THAT, EVEN NOW, THE CHANTING ON SHORE RISES TO A TREMULOUS CRESCENDO...?

...OR THAT, IN THE SPACE OF THE VERY NEXT HEARTBEAT...?
VALKA!
THE GRANDSIRE OF ALL REPTILES--RISING FROM BELOW--SPLINTERING OUR RAFT--SMASHING IT--!
4







...AND LO, EVEN THE BEAST-THING'S TINY BRAIN WILL LONG REMEMBER THIS DAY AMONG DAYS!

ARE YOU--WELL, MY LIEGE?

I FEARED THAT--ENCUMBERED AS YOU BE BY ARMOR--YOU MIGHT HAVE--

HARBOR NO FEAR FOR MY LIFE, BRULE.

BUT SHANNA, HERE, IS BRAVEST AMONG THE RED SLAYERS--AND IF HE SHOULD PERISH--

--NOT ALL THE SWAMP-DRAGONS FROM HERE TO THE LEMURIAN SEA SHALL KEEP ME FROM MY VENGEANCE!


DEAD! BUT, AT LEAST NO SNAKE-PRIEST OWNS HIS SOUL
AND, SEE HOW OUR RED SLAYERS HAVE CLOSED ABOUT THE FIENDS.
CLOSED ABOUT-- BUT NOT YET SLAIN.
LOOK YOU, KULL!
IF THE RIVER DID NOT CLEANSE YOU, HUMANS--
MAYHAP THIS WILL.!
AARGH
WHAT LIQUID LAY WITHIN THOSE EARTHEN CROCKS, KULL KNOWS NOT--BUT, THE ACRID SMELL OF BURNING FLESH FILLS HIM WITH THE WRATH OF HIS ATLANTEAN TIGER-TOTEM--
AND, HEEDLESS OF DEATH AND DANGER, HE SPRINGS FORWARD--!
NOW, DEVILS-- YOU'LL DEAL WITH KULL!
IT--PASSES BELIEF, MY BRETHREN.
THE FIRE-VENOM HAS NO EFFECT ON THIS MAD-MAN.
THEN FLEE-- FLEE!!
AYE-- FLEE, INDEED-- YOUR SERPENT-SOULS TO SOME SCALE-FLECKED HEAVEN--
--YOUR BODIES, TO THE EARTH-MOTHER'S GAPING MAW!
HSSSS
THERE IS-- NO LIFE LEFT IN THEM, KULL.
BUT, WHAT SORCERY WAS THIS--WHICH SHIELDED YOU, WHEN THAT WARRIOR DIED A PAINFUL DEATH?
SORCERY? YES-- PERHAPS.
IF SO, I KNOW NOT ITS SOURCE--
6.


BUT, IF I AM TRULY ENCHANTED, I NEED THIS ARMOR NO LONGER.
STAY HERE, BRULE-- WHILE I VENTURE WITHIN THE ACCURSED TEMPLE.
YOUR SLAYERS, KULL, ARE VALUSIANS AND MERCEN-ARIES-- YOURS TO COMMAND.
BRULE GOES WHERE HE WILLS!


NO WORD OF KING OR COURTIER CAN SWAY THE MIND OF THE WILLFUL PICT--AND SO, TWO MEN SET FORTH, IN SEARCH OF AUGHT WHICH MAY LIVE WITHIN--




--BUT NEARLY FIND DEATH, INSTEAD!
KULL! THE FLOOR--IT DROPS AWAY BENEATH OUR FEET--!


I HAVE THE LEDGE, BRULE--AND YOU HAVE ME.
NO NEED, THEN, FOR HISSING TO ESCAPE YOUR LIPS.
IT WAS NOT MY HISSING YOU HEARD--


--BUT THEIRS!


BRULE--GO BACK AND WARN MY MEN NOT TO FOLLOW US. MY MAGIC CHARM, IT SEEMS, DOES NOT EXTEND TO OTHERS.
GO--OR WE'LL HAVE IT OUT HERE, WITH SWORDS
NO PURPOSE WILL THAT SERVE.
THUS-- I GO.


THEN, ALONE, THE ONCE-SAVAGE KULL WANDERS DEEPER INTO THE DARKNESS --THE SERPENT-SCENT NEARLY CHOKING HIM NOW-- UNTIL--
VALKA!


HIS KEEN SENSES SURVEY THE SCENE IN A MOMENT: A GROTESQUE CARVEN IDOL--AND BEFORE IT, A SWATHED FIGURE, UPON AN ALTAR--AND ABOVE THAT FORM, ANOTHER--!
YOU THERE-- SNAKE-PRIEST!
TURN-- FOR VENGEANCE STALKS YOUR FETID HALLS THIS DAY!
7


STAY YOUR VENGEANCE, KULL OF VALUSIA! 'TIS NO ACCURSED SERPENT PRIEST YOU SEE BEFORE YOU...
...BUT A MAN OF SCIENCE, AS MUCH THEIR FOEMAN AS YOURSELF.
TO PROVE MY HUMANITY, I SPEAK THE WORDS NO SNAKE-MAN CAN SAY...
"KA NAMA KAA LA JERAMA!"
WELL SAID! YOU'VE SAVED YOUR LIFE WITH THOSE MOUTHINGS.
YET, SPEAK AGAIN-- TO TELL ME WHO YOU ARE.


I AM...THULSA DOOM.


"FROM FAR-DISTANT GRONDAR I HAIL, ON A MISSION OF REVENGE NO LESS SACRED THAN YOUR OWN...FOR, THE SERPENT-MEN DID STEAL AWAY MY BETROTHED..!
"THRU GLOOMY, ADDER-HAUNTED SWAMPS I TRACKED THEM--READY TO TRADE MY LIFE FOR THAT OF THE WOMAN I LOVED...


...BUT, I WAS TOO LATE!
THE PRIEST-THINGS KNEW YOU WERE COMING, KING... AND, RATHER THAN FACE THEIR DEATHS WITH ONE FINAL ACT OF MERCY...
...THEY CHOSE TO SLAY HER, LIKE SOME ANIMAL ON THEIR UNHOLY ALTAR.
THEN SAD I AM, THULSA DOOM, THAT WE ARRIVED NOT A FEW MOMENTS SOONER.
HOLD! THE GEMS WHICH ONCE WERE THAT STATUE'S EYES...THEY BOTH ARE GONE!
BOTH STOLEN LONG SINCE, FOR THEIR MAGICAL POWERS.
NAY, MAN. ONLY ONE IS TRULY LOST...
8


FOR, IT WAS A SAVAGE PICT WHO PURLOINED ONE OF THEM, YEARS AGONE...
...WHENCE IT FELL INTO MY HANDS...
...FOR ALL THE GOOD IT DOES MY SWORD-ARM.


STILL, THE LEGENDS SAY THAT HE WHO HOLDS BOTH STONES TOGETHER... POSSESSES POWER WITHOUT EQUAL.
THUS LOST IN MUSING, THE ATLANTEAN DOES NOT TAKE NOTE OF THE SOLEMN STRANGER, RECLINING HIS HEAD UPON THE ALTAR IN SOB-WRACKED GRIEF...
NOR DOES HE SEE A SHINY BAUBLE LIFTED GENTLY, FURTIVELY FROM THE DEAD GIRL'S TRESSES...


THEN, BREAKING THE OMINOUS SILENCE...
ENOUGH! THIS TEMPLE HAS STOOD FOR CENTURIES.
THIS DAY...AN END!


KULL--WHAT? WHO IS--?
WORDS SHALL COME LATER. NOW STAND YE BACK, ALL--
--FOR FLAMING OILS FILL YON MONUMENT TO EVIL--
--AND, LIKE A THING WHICH ONCE DID LIVE--IT SHALL DIE!!


THE NOXIOUS VAPORS OF THE PLACE MUST HAVE MIXED UNTIMELY WITH THE FLAMES. BUT HOW DID YOU KNOW--?
I--SIMPLY KNEW, AS CLEARLY AS IF A VOICE DID WHISPER IN MY EAR!
BY THE BYE, BRULE ...THIS IS THULSA DOOM, OF GRONDAR.
THE FAME OF EVEN KING KULL'S UNDERLINGS HAS SPREAD TO MY LAND.
AND I HAVE HEARD FEARFUL WHISPERS OF ONE CALLED THULSA DOOM...
YET, IT WAS FROM THE INHUMAN WASTES TO THE SOUTH THE MURMURS CAME ...NOT FROM GRONDAR.
THE RAIN GROWS COLD, KULL...
SHOULD WE NOT RETURN TO YOUR CITY OF WONDERS?
9











...AND WHICH THRIVES, UNSHATTERED, TILL THE CITY OF WONDERS HEAVES INTO VIEW AMID THE RUMBLINGS OF THUNDER AND THE FAINT, IMAGINED STIRRINGS OF THE EARTH ITSELF...

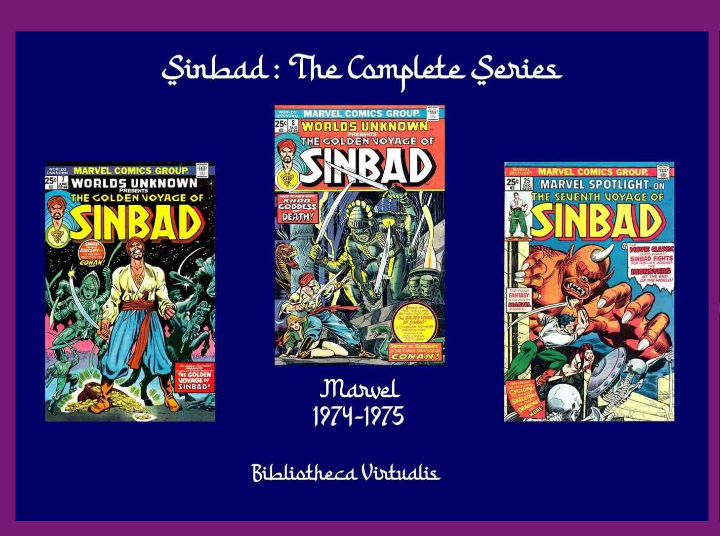
YET, IS IT MERE IMAGINATION WHICH MAKES KULL, AND BRULE, AND ALL OF THEM TO HALF-GLIMPSE, AMID A MOMENT'S LIGHTNING-FLASH...

...A GLEAMING DEATH'S HEAD, BROODING ABOVE THOSE PROUD SPIRES...?

AND IS IT THAT WHICH CAUSES THULSA DOOM TO...SMILE...?

NEXT: A VIPER IN OUR MIDST!

Histoires d'Heroic Fantasy Disponibles dans Bibliotheca Virtualis



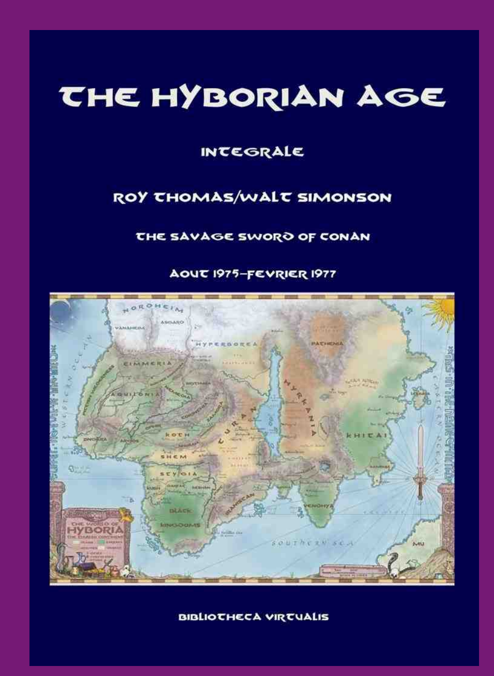


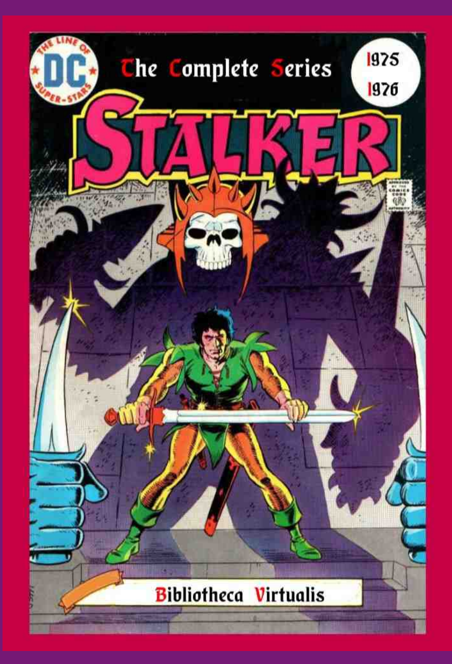


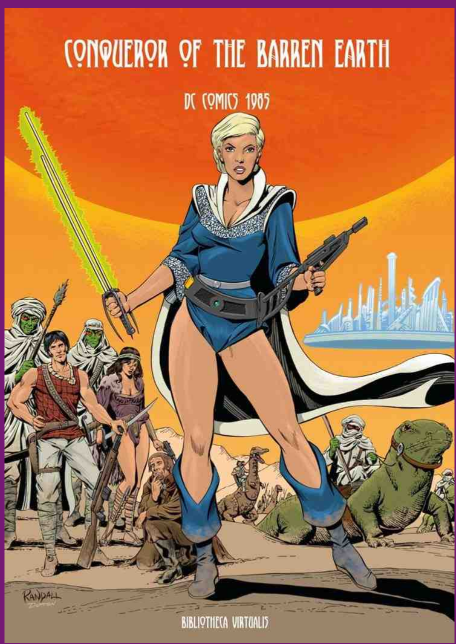


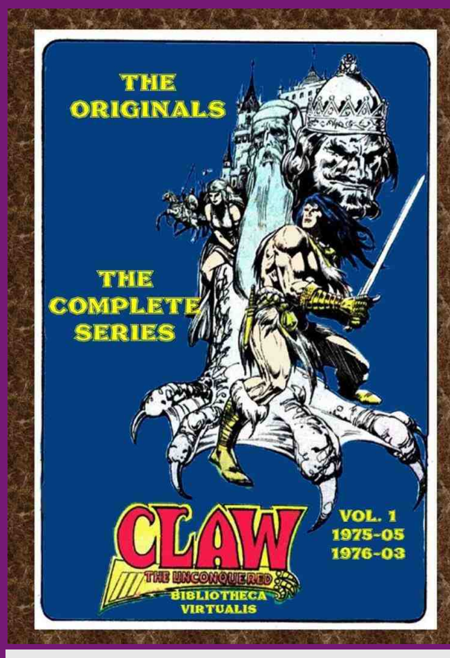


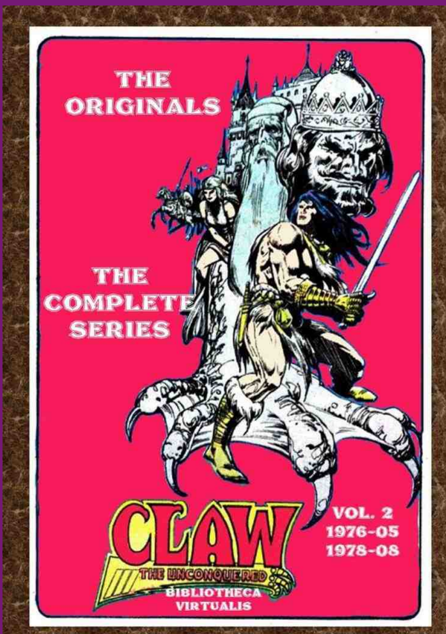
En Anglais

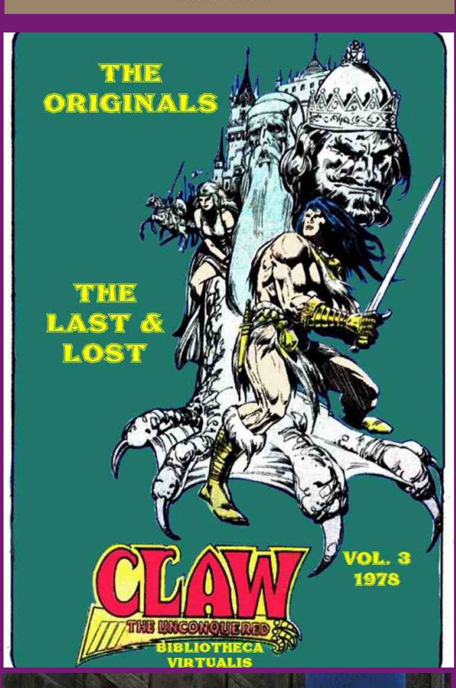

THE HYBORIAN AGE
INTEGRALE
ROY THOMAS/WALT SIMONSON
THE SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN
AOUT 1975-FEVRIER 1977
BIBLIOTHECA VIRTUALIS

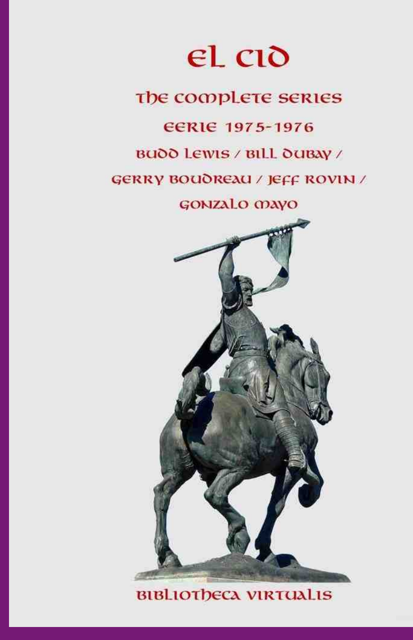

The Complete Series
1975
1976
STALKER
Bibliotheca Virtualis

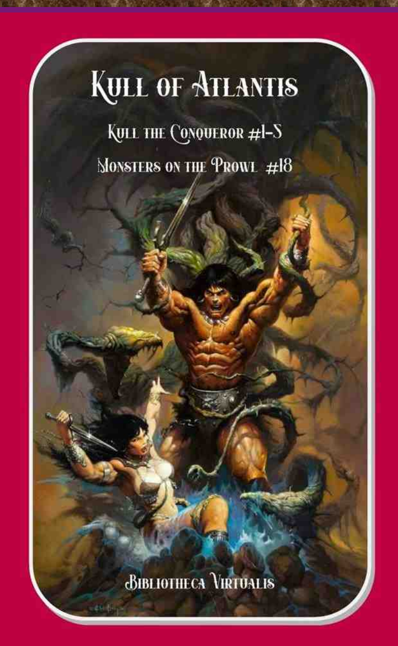

CONQUEROR OF THE BARREN EARTH
DC COMICS 1985
BIBLIOTHECA VIRTUALIS

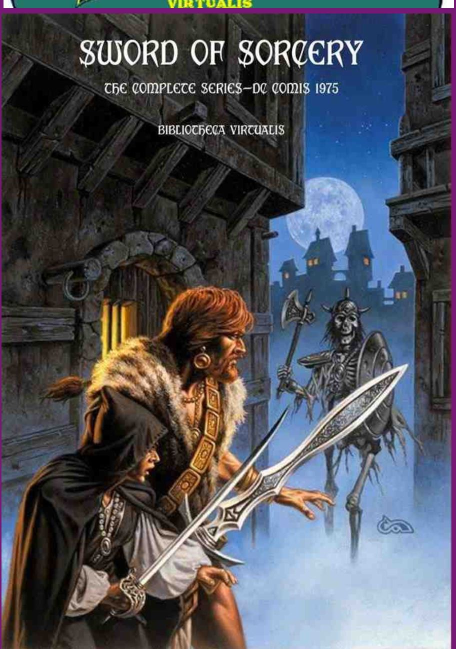

THE ORIGINALS
THE COMPLETE SERIES
CLAW
THE UNCONQUERED
VOL. 1
1975-05
1976-03
BIBLIOTHECA VIRTUALIS


THE ORIGINALS
THE COMPLETE SERIES
CLAW
THE UNCONQUERED
VOL. 2
1976-05
1978-08
BIBLIOTHECA VIRTUALIS

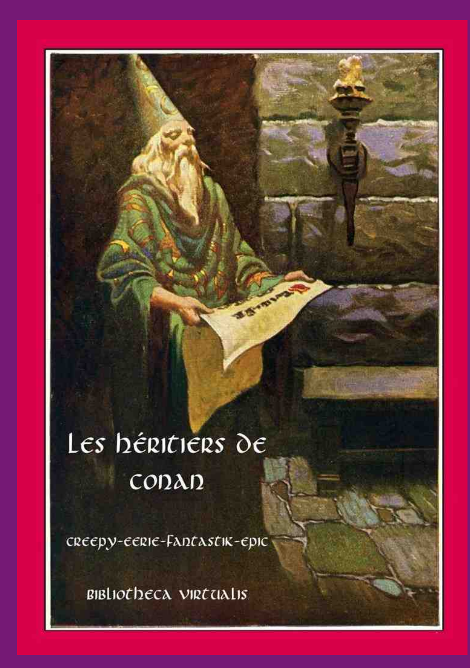

THE ORIGINALS
THE LAST & LOST
CLAW
THE UNCONQUERED
VOL. 3
1978
BIBLIOTHECA VIRTUALIS


EL CID
THE COMPLETE SERIES
EERIE 1975-1976
BUDD LEWIS / BILL DUBAY /
GERRY BOUDREAU / JEFF ROVIN /
GONZALO MAYO
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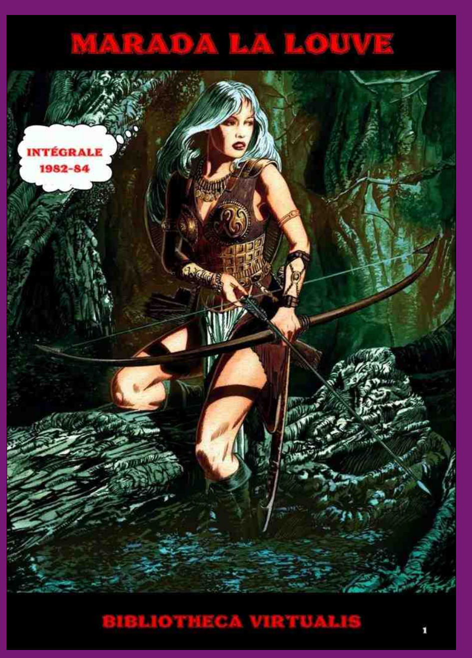

KULL OF ATLANTIS
KULL THE CONQUEROR #1-5
MONSTERS ON THE PROWL #18
BIBLIOTHECA VIRTUALIS

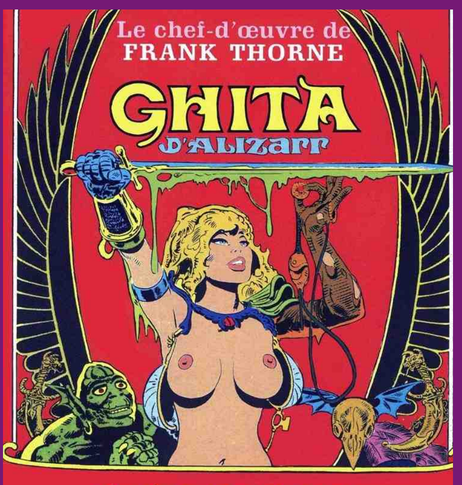

SWORD OF SORCERY
THE COMPLETE SERIES-DC COMIS 1975
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En Anglais

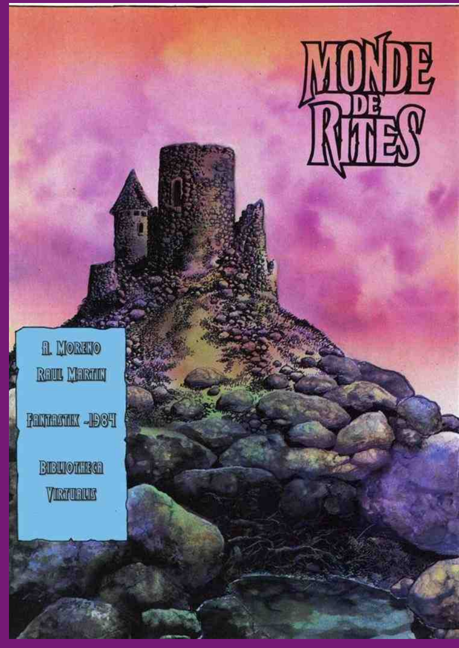

Les héritiers de conan
creepy-eerie-fantastik-epic
bibliotheca virtualis

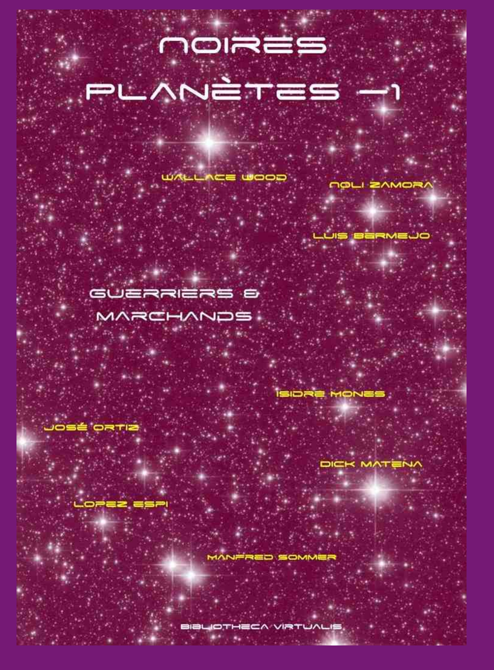

WeirdWorld
le maitre des dragons de klarn
doug moench / john buscema
epic (1984)
bibliotheca virtualis


MARADA LA LOUVE
INTÉGRALE
1982-84
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Le chef-d'œuvre de
FRANK THORNE
GHITA
D'ALIZARR


L'INTÉGRALE PARUE DANS
ÈRE COMPRIMÉE
POUR LECTEURS AVERTIS UNIQUEMENT
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MONDE DE RITES
A. MORENO
RAUL MARTIN
FANTASTIK -1984
BIBLIOTHECA VIRTUALIS


NOIRES
PLANÈTES -1
WALLACE WOOD
NOLI ZAMORA
LUIS BERMEJO
GUERRIERS &
MARCHANDS
ISIDRE MONES
JOSÉ ORTIZ
DICK MATENA
LOPEZ ESPI
MANFRED SOMMER
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serge de beketch
loro
PAYS de WAORA
MESA DES COUARDS
LANDE DU GÉANT FENTE-DE-CORNE
MARAIS DU SERPENT A DEUX QUEUES
AUBERGE DES PELERINS
GRANDE RIVIERE
FORÊT DES HOMMES SINGES
CIMETIÈRE DES SERCHES
PAYS DE L'ETERNEL BROUILLARD
PAYS OU TON AME TE QUITTE
RAPIDES
SOUTERRAINS DES SORCIERS
LES SEPT MONTAGNES
ILE DU DIEU
HOMMES-POISSONS
GAROTCHER la VORACE.
EINAR LE TOURMENTEUR
CERA
l'œil de dieu
la porte de taï-matsu
pilote (1971-1973)


En Français

